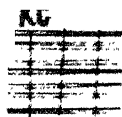


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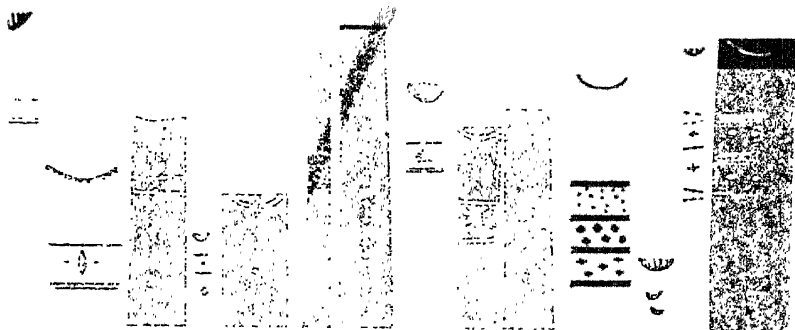


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## DEDICATION

Dedicated to the memory of George Clinton Densmore Odell who, by his many years of indefatigable research and compilation, has bequeathed to scholars the invaluable volumes of his *Annals of the New York Stage*.

# SOME THEATRICAL STOCK COMPANIES OF NEW YORK

by

GEORGE C. D. ODELL

This essay, found among the papers of the late George C. D. Odell which were bequeathed to the Brander Matthews Dramatic Museum of Columbia University, was issued by the Museum to accompany the exhibit, "Two Centuries of the New York Stage" (1751-1951), open from March through October 1951. However, the intrinsic value of the essay is such that Dr. Henry W. Wells, Curator of the Museum, has kindly given his permission for the following reprint.

For several years, now, we have heard talk of the revival of stock companies, as the panacea for the present state of things theatrical.\* Actors are vehemently discussing, the public takes a languid interest. Managers are at their wits' end to know what the dear people want. The "star" system, many assert, has brought about its own downfall. When the star's name bristles six feet high on the bill-boards and the playwright is a mere adjunct to the tailor and the milliner, and the scene-painter, what becomes of the drama? In fact, we are, apparently, in a state of theatrical depression, wherein all lovers of the play must either rejoice as at the beginning of a return to the methods of the "palmy" days, or sorrow at the prospective entrance into a worse state than now prevails. Meantime, cheap stock companies prosper throughout the land; but that is not what we want. We want a regular combination of the best players established in one or more Broadway theatres, giving adequate performances of good plays, old and new. In other words, we want the modern equivalent of Burton's and Wallack's. Can we have it? Will it pay? If it will not pay, can we have a theatre endowed either by millionaires or by the government?

\* Unfortunately, this essay bears no date, but Mr. Odell's comments concerning current actors and theatres show that the writing antedates 1915. Thus the essay was written at least twelve years before the appearance of the first volume of his *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York 1927).

Why did stock companies go out of existence in New York? Largely, I think, because of the growth of the town. When we were a little community of some few thousand souls, we could take the players of one or two theatres to our hearts; they could be ours, and we could love them, almost with a personal affection. Mr. Burton or Mr. Wallack, walking down Broadway in 1850, would be of us; all loungers would know them, from the Astor House to the Battery. Today, what proportion of "hustlers" on the same thoroughfare could point out the dramatic favorites of the hour? In the "good old days" play-goers were a compact body who knew the men and women playing even the most minor parts in a stock company; today, the sprawling millions that straggle in and out of Mr. Charles Frohman's theatres do not care for any name or personality except that of the star, and Mr. Sargent's pupils who obligingly "assist" might just as well be labelled with numbers or letters as with their carefully elaborated *noms de théâtre*. The building of countless new theatres throughout the country spread out talent very thin. Mere mass extinguished the stock companies. Meantime, it becomes a kind of melancholy pleasure to call them back, if only for a minute, to the crowded theatre of memory.

The first distinctive stock company of modern times in New York was that of William Mitchell, at the famous Olympic Theatre. Of course, all early theatres in New York had their own companies, but the Park, for instance, the most renowned playhouse of the first half of the 19th Century, became noted as the theatre of action for great stars, though supported always by the company of the house. In this regular company appeared Henry Placide, Peter Richings, George Barrett, William Chipindale, Charlotte Cushman, Mrs. Vernon, Mrs. Barnes — to mention only a few of the later members — but the Park Theatre will always be famed as the one on whose boards appeared the greatest succession of stars, foreign and native, known in the history of the American stage. From 1810 to 1848, when it was destroyed by fire, fashionable New York saw, within this building, the American debuts of George Frederick Cooke, Edmund Kean, J. W. Wallack, J. B. Booth, Macready, the elder and younger Mathews, Charles and Fanny Kemble, Malibran, Clara Fisher, Hamblin, Ellen Tree, Charles Kean, Fanny Elssler, Tyrone



Power, and the first appearance in New York of Edwin Forrest and Murdock. With this sort of thing, of course, Mitchell did not attempt to compete. In fact, the glory of the old Park had departed when Mitchell took the reins of management at the Olympic. The public was weary, for the present, of the "legitimate"; the fearful financial depression of 1837-1842 literally extinguished the hopes of Simpson, the Park manager; people began to cultivate the home circle, the lecture-hall and church-going. No new stars came along to whet the public curiosity, and the efforts of the stock company excited only languid or spasmodic interest. The Park was not the only sufferer in these troublous times. Hamblin struggled along feebly at the Bowery, and the correct and elegant taste of the elder Wallack failed to make a permanent success of the new National. These were probably the worst theatrical times on record; reduction of prices, combinations of great artists, all failed to react on the sluggish seeker of amusement.

Into such a condition of affairs was born Mitchell's Olympic, December 9, 1839. This was one of the most popular theatres ever known in New York. It had been built, two years before, for the favourite comedian, Blake, and was, perhaps, the most tasteful playhouse ever erected up to that time, in America. It was modelled on Mme. Vestris's London Theatre, and was a veritable bandbox of a house, beautifully fitted up, and with that "homey" feeling, so essential to the successful theatre. It merited its name of the "drawing-room of comedy." But it began in the disastrous times of the late 'thirties, and failed as a home of the polite drama. It had a very precarious career, until it came under the management of Mitchell. This Englishman first appeared in America, at the National Theatre, in 1836. He was a clever low comedian and an efficient stage-manager (the latter function he fulfilled at the National), but he attracted no great attention until he assumed control of the Olympic. Then began ten years of success almost unparalleled in the early history of the drama in New York.

Mitchell's Olympic might be called the "Weberfields" of the 'forties. The manager had an enviable knack of knowing exactly what his public wanted. It wanted relaxation from business worry and it would be amused at any nonsense that tickled

its ribs. Mitchell travestied everything, in this little house of his, from grand opera to Fanny Elssler's dances. He had the assistance of the indefatigable Horncastle, who would write burlesques almost while you waited, and act in them, too, to the great delight of Olympic audiences. One of the first of these was the screamingly funny "The Savage and the Maiden," founded on the Crummles episodes in "Nicholas Nickleby," in which Mitchell made so great a success as Crummles that the name clung to him for the rest of his life. His original style, founded on his own perceptions, not on the noisy conventions of the low comedians of his time, at once took the town, and, as a mere humorous entertainer, if not as an actor, he has seldom been surpassed.

Travesty followed travesty. "Zampa, the Red Corsair," became "Mitchellized" into "Sam Parr, with his Red Coarse Hair"; Norma, the *grande dame* of tragic opera, was belittled into Mrs. Normer; Hamlet was ridiculed out of all melancholy in the famous "Hamlet Travestie," and no serious and respectable hero or heroine of drama or fiction was safe from the irreverent band of comedians that Mitchell gathered about him.

To this little theatre young and old New York went to amuse itself. Fashion and wit vied with each other in laughing at Mitchell's "latest." The admission was ridiculously low, even for those hard times — twelve and a half cents to the pit — and in this house people could gather without the formality and fine linen necessary at the Park. It became "the thing" for literary men and men about town to gather for the fooling so plentifully exhibited on the stage. As at Weber and Fields', freedom without offence pervaded the auditorium. The pit was reserved exclusively for the male sex, and ladies confined themselves to the two tiers of boxes.

Over this band Mitchell ruled for ten years by good nature. If the boys in the pit — Saturday nights were reserved for news-boys — became obstreperous, the manager at once quieted them by threatening to raise the price of admission to twenty-five cents — a most effective threat. In fact, Mitchell was one of the most skillful "jolliers" in the world, and the American public loves a good "jollier." His announcements were among the most humorous publications of the time.

By 1842, he simply played with his audiences, to their infinite

delight. This announcement of his benefit, for June 6, of that year, is quoted from Colonel Brown:

*Grand Complimentary Benefit  
given by Mr. Mitchell to Himself*

The seats of the pit will be covered with people—(Perhaps). The dress circle will be full if enough tickets are sold to fill it, and the upper boxes will positively be above the dress circle.

The arrangements will *not* be under the direction of a committee of gentlemen at the Astor House.

The prices will be, for this night only (being the last of the season), the same as usual.

*Regulations*

Observe that all pipe-laying is finished opposite the theatre — they will, therefore, to prevent confusion, set the company down with the horses's heads in front and their tails behind.

On arriving at the door of the theatre, the audience will purchase their tickets (if not provided with them previously), and proceed at once in a grand cavalcade to the interior, where they will seat themselves as comfortably as possible, and laugh and applaud incessantly. It is particularly requested that those who cannot get front seats will sit on the back ones, and those who cannot get any will stand at ease and pay attention.

At the conclusion of the performances, the audience will retire in the same order, and drivers are requested to keep their horses' tails as before.

This was just the sort of man to give New York what it liked — clever, resourceful, energetic. And certain phases of New York life were mirrored photographically on that stage; bits of Broadway and of the Bowery. "The Olympic Revels" presented the whole company in admirable fooling, as gods and goddesses. Passing moods were represented or burlesqued; the place was up-to-date, and everything was well done.

Like all successful managers, Mitchell also had the ability to gather about him the best actors. He was a genius at discovering and developing incipient talent. As Ireland says, many people made their fame under Mitchell's guidance; especially he sought and found a number of beautiful, brilliant young women, who were the pride and delight of the "Olympians" in the audiences. With the memories of the Olympic are inseparably associated the names of Charles Walcot, the elder, George Holland, the elder, John Nickinson, Mary Taylor ("our" Mary), Constantia Clarke,

Mary Gannon, and Mrs. Timm, who made up, with Mitchell himself, an array of comic talent seldom, if ever, surpassed in this country. And how the Olympians loved them all! Veterans today — boys of that long ago — will tell you of the rivalry of the Taylor and Clarke factions; how Mary Taylor sang and perked her way into the heart of every boy there, and how her archness and her soubrette style seemed the perfection of acting until you looked at the more gentle and refined Clarke, with her lovely face already marked, faintly, with the ravages of the disease soon to shut out its light forever. And then this exquisite creature at last came into her own, and seemed the very pattern of womanly grace. And what were "our" Mary's exuberant delights now? could she be just a bit (under the breath be it said) vulgar at times? But such a luscious voice and such an amplitude of charms! Alas, she, too, was to enter, early, the dark house — a woman as good as she was popular, an honour to the stage and to womanhood. And then, toward the end of the *regime*, Mary Gannon bounded into that career of popularity which was to lead her to the exclusive doors of Wallack's and to make her the acknowledged comedienne of the last mid-century in America; the most irresistibly attractive actress of her time. These three stand out prominently in the history of the Olympic, but the valuable comic aid of Mrs. Timm was employed in many parts, and Mrs. Watts (afterwards the excellent Mrs. John Sefton) made her mark on the hardened sensibilities of the pit.

Of the men, Charles Walcot, father of our present popular comedian, deserves first mention. A more versatile or a quainter actor has not graced our boards; his writing for the stage was also acceptable. He filled a variety of characters at Mitchell's, but it was in the next decade, at Wallack's (the Broome Street house) that he established his reputation. I find that in two or three years, there, he played an astonishing range of characters, including Touchstone, Bob Acres, Claudio (in "Much Ado"), Graves (in "Money"), Sir Benjamin Backbite, Tattle (in "Love for Love"), and John Smith (in Brougham's "Pocahontas"). He was the best Touchstone of his time, and Ireland calls him "one of the very best light and eccentric actors that ever trod the stage." Perhaps it was this very versatility (unequalled by any actor since, except Charles Fisher) that militated against his

fame. He played at Wallack's, always to his credit, in company with Blake, Placide, and Lester Wallack; but those actors, limiting themselves to a set line of character, have acquired a lasting renown that utility men, even of the highest type, like Fisher and Walcot, fail to attain.

George Holland was with Mitchell for the greater part of the ten Olympic years. He was probably the broadest of the group of low comedians to which he belonged. He valued a character, says Colonel Brown, not for its psychological possibilities, but for the amount of fun he could extract from it. "A fall over a table or a chair was more precious to him than the wittiest speech ever written." His comic "snuffle" and the flirt of his coat tails always set an audience in a roar. At least one of his distinguished sons is a better actor than he. Holland was a great practical joker, and the mere mention of his name recalls stories of his angling, sadly, for gold-fish in the fountain in Union Square Park, of his falling in fits in the midst of astonished crowds in Broadway, and of his numerous tricks to sell tickets for his benefits. His name will always be connected with that of the Little Church Around the Corner. He was for many years a popular actor and man, and is a prominent figure in our stage annals. He also attained his highest renown at Wallack's.

"The Savage and the Maiden" was the first complete success at the Olympic; perhaps "A Glance at New York" was the last. In this piece, presented in 1848, Frank Chanfrau made his first great hit. His portrayal of Mose, the Bowery B'hoy, is possibly as famous in the American theatrical gallery as Jefferson's Asa Trenchard, or Owen's Solon Shingle. We have all heard the story of its production. It grew from suggestions in Chanfrau's imitations, among his friends, of the Bowery tough, then a mighty man in his way, the specimen that Thackeray was so anxious to see. These imitations were worked up into a sketch, which Mitchell at first refused to produce. Then it was unearthed for somebody's benefit and presto! the thing was done. Chanfrau's Mose, the fireman, with his "soap" locks, "plug" hat, boots, and red shirt was the sensation of the hour; every movement, look, tone of voice, was recognized as true to the type. The sketch was amplified by the addition of many scenes, and the character of 'Lize was worked up for Mary Taylor. The whole thing was a tre-

mendous success, the forerunner of Edward Harrigan's plays of low life, and perhaps of the "localisms" of Weber and Fields.

These travesties and local skits were the staple of Mitchell's wares; of course, too, the regulation farces were played from time to time. Once, even, the polished W. R. Blake filled an engagement at the Olympic in old comedy. Generally, however, three or four laughable farces and burlettas made up the evening's entertainment, or perhaps one of the lighter operas would be performed. All was variety and quick change; an efficient stage management and a company of brilliant talent. That was the "idea" of Mitchell's Olympic, a theatre for which, at first, he paid a rental of \$25 a week, for which he hired an orchestra of four musicians, and the expenses of which did not, in the first year or two, exceed eighty dollars per night.

I have dwelt at such length on this theatre, not because it is the kind of thing we mean when we desire the return of stock companies, but because of its importance in the history of our stage and the vague tradition still hovering of the glories of the place. Mitchell's was snuffed out (Lester Wallack's phrase), in 1850, by the organiser of the first great modern stock company, in the best sense of the term — William E. Burton. Burton was not unknown in New York as a comedian or even as a manager (he had managed the National a few months before it burned down in 1841), but latterly he had devoted his time to Philadelphia, and had watched, with interest, the success of Mitchell in New York. The failure of Palmo's Opera House in Chambers Street gave him his chance. He took the house in 1848, and opened it as Burton's Chambers Street Theatre. This theatre is one of the great landmarks in the history of the New York stage. At first Burton did not succeed very well; he produced farces and burlesques as Mitchell had done; but the public was coy. John Brougham united with him and he was worth, says Lester Wallack, forty Horncastles. It was through Brougham's version of "Dombey and Son" that success came to Burton. It was first produced, July 24, 1848, and was a failure. It was withdrawn, revised, and reproduced in three weeks with overwhelming acclaim. Burton's Cap'n Cuttle is one of the famous things of the stage; its mingled pathos and humour have engaged far abler pens than mine. In every detail it was Dickens's mariner in the

flesh. Thousands have laughed and wept over it, and today Burton is best known for his performance of this part. Brougham was no less great in the double rôle of Jack Bunsby and Joey Bagstock. Mrs. Hughes was the original Mrs. Skewton, but Mrs. Vernon succeeded her — why, no one knows — on the second production of the piece. Oliver B. Raymond was also enormously successful as Mr. Toots.

This piece was one of the mainstays of Burton's for years. "When in doubt, revive 'Dombey & Son.'" Mrs. Russell (afterwards Mrs. John Hoey) made her first great hit as Edith, in a later revival, and, about the same time, Caroline Chapman was actually Susan Nipper herself. This last named actress was the best soubrette of her time, and the list of her successes on Burton's stage would fill a column. Neither Mary Taylor nor Emma Skerrett, both popular actresses at Burton's, could efface her in critical esteem.

By singular good fortune, Burton found two other plays, within two years, absolutely suited to his talents. The first of these, "The Toodles," was played October 27, 1848; Burton's Toodles ranks only below his Cap'n Cuttle, as a masterpiece of humour. The second of these plays, "The Serious Family," December 3, 1849, gave Burton his third great chance in the part of the solemn hypocrite, Aminidab Sleek. With these three parts — Cuttle, Toodles, Sleek — his fame is chiefly identified. It is thought that Burton had more to do with their success than had their authors; he worked them up until every word and action was his own. They have died with him. So great was the public demand, that Tuesdays and Fridays were regularly set aside for the performance of "The Toodles" and "The Serious Family," and patrons went again and again, seemingly incapable of tiring of these infinitely various and contrasted characterisations. It is but fair to say that Mrs. Hughes was a tower of strength in the supporting company.

These three successes led Burton far from the Mitchell ideals of farce and burletta. He was in the stream of refined comedy, and naturally, as the novelty wore from the "big three," he turned to the old comedies, then the touchstone of a manager's success. The engagement of William Rufus Blake and J. Lester (Wallack), on September 2, 1850, made possible an excellent

cast of "The School for Scandal": Blake played Sir Peter; Lester, Charles Surface; Burton, Sir Oliver Surface; George Jordan, Sir Benjamin; and Mrs. Russell, Lady Teazle.

Inspired by the success of "Dombey," Burton produced Dr. Northall's version of "David Copperfield," shortly after. But his Micawber never ranked with his Cap'n Cuttle, though it had a wonderful support: Blake playing Peggoty; T. B. Johnson, Uriah Heep (a remarkable performance, the fame of which has come down to our times); Lester, Steerforth; George Jordan, David; Mrs. Hughes, Betsy Trotwood; Mrs. Russell, Rosa Dartle; Mrs. Burton, Emily; and the beautiful Lizzie Weston, Martha.

The third and last step in Burton's career as a manager began with his first Shaksperian revival — "Twelfth Night" — on March 29, 1852. The cast was astonishing: Burton was Sir Toby Belch; Lester, Sir Andrew; Blake, Malvolio; Henry Placide, the Clown; John Dyott, Orsino; Lizzie Weston, Viola; and Mary Taylor, Maria. Joseph Jefferson in speaking of this performance doubts if the play was ever better acted. Burton, Blake, and Placide were simply the foremost comedians of their day in America; to see them together was the privilege of a dramatic life-time.

The last years of Burton's management (he gave up the Chambers Street house in 1856) saw elaborate and scholarly revivals of "The Tempest," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "The Winter's Tale," and "The Merry Wives of Windsor." The wonder was that such exquisite effects could be produced on so small a stage. In these revivals the company was of the highest merit, and the general effect had probably never been surpassed.

The eight years of Burton at this theatre, it will be seen, progressed steadily from farce and burlesque to serious drama, old comedy and Shakspeare. Everything was well done, and perhaps no company ever brought out, better, an author's meaning. Henry Placide, the best all-round actor America has produced, the original (in America) and greatest Sir Harcourt Courtly, famed as Sir Peter Teazle, Sir Anthony Absolute, and all the choleric old gentlemen of comedy, played engagements here every year; Blake, the genial, tender Old Dornton and Jesse Rural; Brougham, Lester (Wallack), Burton, best of low comedians, with his Protean face, handsome George Jordan, Charles Fisher,



Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Russell, Miss Chapman, Mary Taylor, Lizzie Weston — what an array! It has probably never been surpassed in individual talent, in this or any other country.

Burton's theatre also stood for an idea; it falls into place in the history of the stage. It combined the best of the new with the best of the old; it was more modern in method than had been the Park. But it did not live up to its high beginnings; the company fell off, and Burton dominated on the stage. That meant the preponderance of low comedy. Blake and Brougham were attracted elsewhere, and, in 1852, joined the company of the opposition at Wallack's Lyceum. In fact, just as Burton had effaced Mitchell, Wallack effaced Burton. He produced English comedy more elegantly, with greater attention to detail, and he generally attracted to his theatre the best stock actors of the day. Burton's was found to be out of the way and perhaps (just *perhaps*) a bit coarse. His own style was a trifle broad. And so fickle fashion turned away. Burton tried a change of house and moved to the old Tripler Hall in 1856; but fortune did not follow, and, in 1858, he gave up management forever. Two more years of profitable starring, still in company with the faithful Mrs. Hughes, and Burton's earthly career was over.

This, in brief, is the history of Burton's Theatre, which, in its day, was known far and wide and was the source of the keenest delight to theatre-goers. Burton's dictatorial manners were said to repel his actors, and people were not induced to stay. His last companies were feeble in comparison with his first. But for good or ill, Burton's must be reckoned with, and its history forms a shining page in the annals of the New York theatre.

James William Wallack, the founder of Wallack's Theatre, was personally one of the most urbane and courteous of gentlemen. He made his first appearance in America, as Macbeth, at the Park Theatre, September 7, 1818, and at once established himself as a careful and conscientious, if not a highly emotional, actor. He had acquired fame on the London stage in a wide range of character, and in his successive engagements in New York he played with eminent ability parts ranging from tragedy and melodrama to the light gallants of comedy, associated with the name of Charles Kemble. He was also excellent as the bluff, rural father. Everything Wallack did was the result of scholarly thought

and he never failed to devote the last degree of consideration to details. In 1837-1839, he was manager of the National Theatre and by his conduct of the stage dealt the first crushing blow to the prestige of Simpson at the Park; the superiority of modern methods was evident.

In 1852, this tactful man gained possession of Brougham's Lyceum, on the west side of Broadway, two doors below Broome Street. Brougham, as always, had signally failed as a manager, and, after some delay, the services of Wallack were called in. He renovated the house, making it a model of comfort and elegance. On the stage he gathered a notable company of comedians, and he gave the maximum of attention to perfecting the general excellence of the performances. Every detail was scrutinized; even the buttons on an actor's coat passed under the manager's watchful eye. The scenery was tasteful, the costuming correct. Old English comedy formed the staple of entertainment, and it is probable that the plays of Sheridan, Goldsmith, Holcroft and Colman have never been better presented than they were at this house between 1852 and 1860. Wallack himself appeared from time to time as Benedick, Shylock, Jaques, and other favourite parts in his repertory.

From the first, the theatre was a success. The public quickly learned that the best and most elegant amusement was here offered; Wallack catered to the more refined element in the community and his house became the rendezvous of fashion that the old Park had been in its palmy days. Mitchell's was bohemian, and Burton's democratic, but Wallack's always suggested aristocratic breeding. On opening night there was a gathering of the best society in New York. And nothing was allowed on that stage to offend the most fastidious. The taste, the finish of the performances was a revelation.

The stock company of this playhouse is the most famous in our theatrical annals, and has been approached only by the later aggregation of Augustin Daly at the last house he managed in New York. From the first, the handsome and popular Lester threw in his fortunes with his father, though it was not till the company moved to the new theatre at Thirteenth Street and Broadway, in 1861, that he finally assumed the name of Wallack on the play-bills. Brougham and Walcot were an inimitable pair

of comedians, and the mellow Blake gave the weight of authority to the department of old men. Charles Kemble Mason was also in the original company. Practically the first leading lady was Laura Keene. She at once established herself as a mistress of high comedy. Her beauty, her air of breeding, her appreciation of humorous situation, made her, in those days, irresistible. She had temperament and magnetism, finally, the last essential of high success. During the short time she remained at Wallack's, she appeared as Lady Teazle, Lady Gay Spanker, Lydia Languish, and as Beatrice and Rosalind, to the Benedick and Jaques of the elder Wallack.

Wallack's lost the services of Miss Keene, by defection, after one season, and Mrs. Hoey took her place. This actress held her position for nearly ten years, and was justly popular as the fine lady of English comedy, old and new. Her style was tasteful and polished, but it was slightly cold and affected; she lacked the magnetism of Laura Keene and Mary Gannon. Her taste in dress became proverbial, and her husband's fortune allowed her to cultivate it to the full. Whether fairly or not, Mrs. Hoey always receives the credit (or discredit) for starting the present extravagant style of dressing on the stage.

Shortly after the advent of Mrs. Hoey, the company gained by the addition of Mrs. Vernon, Mary Gannon, George Holland, W. R. Floyd, and the correct and formal John Dyott. Dion Boucicault and Agnes Robertson also occasionally appeared. Many actors and actresses of skill and repute joined the ranks from time to time, but Mr. Wallack showed himself a great master of his craft in being able to keep intact the company of leaders. Throughout his career at Broadway and Broome Street, these incomparable actors remained with him, and the performances were models of comedy acting. The company had played so long together that the members knew, accurately, all the foibles and methods of their associates, and could play together in such a way as to produce the most wonderful effects. The smoothness and finish of the performances were remarkable, and for years Wallack's supremacy remained unchallenged. There was an "atmosphere," a mellow tradition, impossible in these days of flitting stars and combinations; a lovely charm as indefinable as it was unmistakable.

The services of this company were best utilised in refined comedy, and hence Wallack's became noted as the home of old English comedy. That was really the "idea" of the theatre. People went to Wallack's without caring, particularly, what the play was to be; it might be Sheridan or Colman or even Boucicault, but Blake would play, and Lester, and Walcot, and Mary Gannon, and that was all one needed to know. And yet, during those years at the Broome Street house, several successful melodramas were produced with tasteful and beautiful scenery and effects, and won great success: "Pauline," Lester Wallack's "The Veteran," in which J. W. Wallack created his last part, and Boucicault's "Jessie Brown, or the Relief of Lucknow," in which Agnes Robertson won so great a triumph.

New York moved uptown, and Wallack's with it. The new theatre at Thirteenth Street opened September 25, 1861, and for twenty years was easily the foremost theatre in the United States. The company was kept for most of that time at the highest standard. Walcot did not appear at this house and Blake remained only one season; but Charles Fisher and Mark Smith were connected with the company from the first, and the lamented John Gilbert succeeded Blake in 1862. Charles Fisher had first appeared in this country at Burton's, in 1852; he had played, later, at Laura Keane's, and from 1862 to 1871 was permanently connected with Wallack's. He finished his honourable career in Daly's company, to which he was attached for nearly twenty years. Fisher was the most versatile actor that ever trod our boards. He was unexcelled as Joseph Surface, as Goldfinch, as Graves, as Triplet, as Malvolio, as Bob Acres. At Wallack's he played every variety of character from the sentimental lover to the befuddled idiot and the doting old father. Mark Smith was the best Sir Oliver Surface in the history of Wallack's Theatre; that comment places him in the company. As to John Gilbert, his fame is too well secured to need discussion here; he forms with Blake and Placide an incomparable comic trio. With them have died the parts of Sir Peter Teazle, Hardcastle, Old Dornton, Jesse Rural, etc. One excelled the other two, perhaps, in certain characters, but the net result is the same; all were perfection as the old men of comedy. John Gilbert remained with the Wallack Company until it disbanded in 1888.

Others who joined Wallack's forces just about the time of moving to the new theatre were Fanny Morant, the best representative of the *grande dame* known to our stage, exquisite little Madeline Henriques, who finally succeeded Mrs. Hoey as leading lady, Clara Jennings, and Ione Burke. Miss Burke's impersonations of afflicted rural girls and Irish lassies ranked only second to Agnes Robertson's. E. L. Davenport, J. W. Wallack, Jr. (Lester's cousin), J. H. Stoddart, and Rose Eytinge were added to the company in the late 'sixties.

The strength of the company can be estimated from the following cast of "The School for Scandal," the regular assignment during the early 'sixties:

Sir Peter Teazle . . . John Gilbert	Trip . . . . . A. W. Young
Sir Oliver Surface . . . Mark Smith	Rowley . . . . . G. F. Browne
Charles . . . . . Lester Wallack	Snake . . . . . Parker
Joseph . . . . . Charles Fisher	Lady Teazle . . . . . Mrs. Hoey
Crabtree . . . . . John Sefton	Mrs. Candour . . . Fanny Morant
Sir Benjamin . . . . W. J. Reynolds	Maria . . . . . Madeline Henriques
Moses . . . . . George Holland	Lady Sneerwell . . Mrs. John Sefton
Careless . . . . . W. R. Floyd	

Any one who knows stage history will perceive the amazing strength of that distribution. But a new "idea" developed in Wallack's with the success of Lester Wallack's play of "Rose-dale," in 1863. This piece was exquisitely mounted and beautifully acted, and had a run of one hundred and twenty-five nights. That was the first long run at Wallack's, and the poison entered the system. The old habitués could not be expected to go constantly to see the same performance, and gradually they were alienated. That, however, was not until later. In 1866, "Ours," Robertson's military comedy, was produced, and had another long run. Thenceforth Wallack's saw the first American production of all the notable Robertson comedies, except "Caste," and became, in fact, a sort of adjunct to Mrs. Bancroft's London theatre. The Robertson comedies represented, indeed, a distinct dramatic mood, with their cup and saucer prettiness, and Wallack's was, of all American theatres, the place to reproduce their exquisite frailty of motive and dialogue. These were presented after the death of the elder Wallack, when Lester had assumed the management of the house, and perhaps Lester Wallack's

*regime* is more noted for its production of the Robertson-Byron school of drama than for anything else. The cynical, blasé, good-natured type of hero presented by these plays was exactly suited to the maturing style of Wallack, himself, and Mary Gannon, and, later, Effie Germon, probably acted the rollicking heroines as well as Mrs. Bancroft, for whom they were written. The plays were given with wonderful attention to detail in setting, and reproduced, exactly, the refined atmosphere of English society from which Robertson drew his types.

By the beginning of the decade 1870-1880, the company of Wallack's Theatre — the company that for twenty years had upheld the traditions of the house — was entirely disintegrated. Gilbert and Ione Burke remained, but new members were contesting for recognition. Those were the days of Montague, Harry Beckett, Mme. Ponisi, Ada Dyas, and Jeffreys Lewis. Later, Rose Coghlan became leading lady. In the season of 1874-1875, Boucicault's melodrama, "The Shaughran," engrossed public attention. It was the greatest financial success the theatre had known, but with it the glory began to depart. Interesting though it was, it was not the kind of play the patrons of Wallack's had been led to expect on the boards of this historic house. The long runs of "Rosedale" and "Ours" bore bitter fruit. Commercialism, perhaps, became too evident, and, anyway, Wallack had to meet powerful rivalry in the well-established companies of Augustin Daly and Albert M. Palmer, the latter of whom was presenting at this very time the phenomenally successful "Two Orphans." Melodrama reigned supreme, and comedy, for the present, hid its head.

It reappeared fitfully, thereafter, on the stage of Wallack's, especially when the manager filled his increasingly infrequent engagements. To the last he could command audiences with his performances of young Marlowe, Jack Poyntz, and Hugh Chalcote. The engagement of Charles Coghlan, also, in 1878-1879, was a great incentive for comedy. "The School for Scandal" was played September 21, 1878, with Coghlan as Charles, Gilbert as Sir Peter, Brougham as Sir Oliver, Charles Barron as Joseph, and Rose Coghlan as Lady Teazle. It was a great success and almost like a revivification of the old masterpiece. But, later, came more melodrama, pieces like "The World," with mechanical

pomp and ceremony, and the good old times were dead. When Wallack moved to the present Wallack's Theatre at Thirtieth Street, in 1882, the thing was Wallack's in name only. The greatest success of the place was the melodramatic "The Silver King." What shall we say of the pitiable close in "Harbor Lights" and other London "thrillers"? Wallack's as an adjunct to the Adelphi and Drury Lane!

Lester Wallack retired from the management in 1887, and for one season Henry E. Abbey tried to re-establish the splendour of the old house. He met with dire failure, and the stock company went out of existence in the spring of 1888, with a few revivals of standard comedies. John Gilbert made an affecting speech at the close of the last performance, and with Rose Coghlan, Osmond Tearle, Harry Edwards, W. J. Leonard, and Mme. Ponisi — the only survivors of past glory at present in the company — he brought down the curtain on Wallack's Theatre, a theatre that for over thirty-five years had been famed for high ideals and lofty accomplishments; which had presented the best of English plays better than they were presented in any other theatre in the land; that, for a large part of its existence had maintained a superb company of comedians and held it together by the exclusiveness of genius. To be recognised as of the "best," one had to act at Wallack's. With changing conditions, the policy changed and became vacillating; Lester Wallack, in his later days, went too unresistingly toward the sensational. But for twenty-five years, Wallack's was a power in the dramatic world, and the fame of its performances survives. Two things are to be noted against the Wallacks, father and son: they discovered no new actors or actresses, and they did nothing, practically, for the American dramatist.

So long as the manager's purpose remained firm, Wallack's successfully crushed all opposition. The formidable rivalry of Laura Keane's theatre lasted from 1856 to 1863, but though many actors of renown appeared in her company, she presided, says Ireland, over warring and discordant elements. Her theatre lacked policy or "idea"; one never knew what to expect of an announced new play. Old comedy varied with spectacle like "The Seven Sisters"; Tom Taylor's famous play, "Our American Cousin," made the fortune of Sothorn, Jefferson, and Laura Keane,

herself; and at this house Boucicault produced his beautiful "Colleen Bawn" and his dramatization of "The Heart of Midlothian." But evil days followed; the manager suffered afflicting vicissitudes of fortune, and finally retired from the field, a disappointed woman. At first her company contained such people as Joseph Jefferson (who made his first successes here, in a great variety of parts), Sothorn, Couldock, Charles Wheatleigh, Mr. and Mrs. Blake, Sara Stevens, and Kate Reignolds; but the last combinations were feeble in comparison. All this is rehearsed at great length, sometimes amusingly, in the "Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson." Laura Keene committed a great blunder in leaving her position at Wallack's, to which its irate manager would never hear of restoring her.

Wallack's was still Wallack's. Its next strong opponent was the pretty little Fifth Avenue Theatre, in Twenty-fourth Street, opened as the home of a stock company by Augustin Daly, in 1869. But the town was now large enough for two fine companies, and Wallack's and Daly's both prospered. Besides, the two houses hardly came into competition. Daly's was a little bandbox of a place, and he honestly strove to make it what he called it, "a parlor-home of comedy." He revived Wallack successes, to be sure, but from the first he strove for plays (again to use his own phrase) "of contemporaneous human interest." Probably "Man and Wife," and his own play of "Divorce," with their mingling of humour and pathos, more nearly represented what he was trying for than would a succession of the best old comedies. "Domestic" drama was well represented in the "parlor-home of comedy," the "P.H.C.," as Clara Morris and some of the other irrepressible members of the company called it. Daly paid great attention to making his stage look exactly like the modern overcrowded drawing-room, and he religiously consulted fashion-plates to get the latest suggestions for clothing the actresses in his employ. The "hominess" of this Fifth Avenue theatre was proverbial. Daly, also, like Mitchell and Burton, could discover and develop talent, a thing the Wallacks seldom cared to do. On this stage, Clara Morris, Agnes Ethel, Fanny Davenport, Kate Claxton, and Sara Jewett became known to fame; Mrs. Gilbert, James Lewis, W. J. Lemoyne, and Davidge were an admirable group of comedians; Louis James and George Clarke were also in the



company, and Fisher and Fanny Morant came from Wallack's. The theatre was a great success, until it burned, on New Year's Day, 1873. The second Fifth Avenue Theatre, at Twenty-eighth Street, never took its place, and Daly, in 1877, retired from its management, leaving Wallack's again in possession of the field of comedy.

Meantime, however, the Union Square Theatre had started in September, 1872, on its career of triumph. Under the able direction of Albert M. Palmer, was inaugurated a series of melodramatic successes almost unparalleled. The fame of "Agnes," "Led Astray," "The Two Orphans," "A Celebrated Case," and "The Banker's Daughter," has come down to the veriest Miss among theatre-goers. This playhouse did not enter into direct rivalry with Wallack's, though the success of its offerings may have led Wallack into his later debauch of melodrama. The history of the Union Square Theatre is known to all students of the drama; during the summer seasons its company travelled from New York to San Francisco. The triumphs of its artists were enormous; this was the scene of the greatest successes of Charles Thorne, Rose Eytinge, and J. H. Stoddart. Moreover, Mr. Palmer enticed from Daly some of his best people — Miss Ethel, Clara Morris, Kate Claxton, and Sara Jewett. For ten years the Union Square Theatre was uninterruptedly prosperous; then fashion turned away, again leaving the veteran Wallack's in possession of the field.

But it was a crippled veteran, as we have seen, when, in 1882, it moved northward. Daly, on the opposite corner, had entered on that long period of success with German farce and Shaksperian comedy, the records of which write high the names of Ada Rehan, John Drew, James Lewis, and Mrs. Gilbert. Mr. Palmer again entered the field at the Madison Square Theatre with an extraordinarily strong company and a series of successful English plays, like "Jim, the Penman," and "Captain Swift." These companies endured a few years after Wallack's died out in 1888. They, too, are gone, and with them the last vestiges of the old stock system in New York.

This system has its advocates and detractors; it is not within the province of this article to discuss its merits or defects. But a method that developed such people as Burton, Blake, Placide,

Gilbert, Fisher, Lester Wallack, Mary Gannon, Mrs. Vernon, Mrs. Gilbert, Sara Jewett, and Ada Rehan is surely worth noting in these modern times of stars that will not shine and plays that will not amuse.

# THE ORGANIZATION OF THE NORWEGIAN THEATRE

by

PER M. SKAVLAN

In January of 1950 the centennial celebration of the founding of the independent Norwegian theatre was held in Bergen, Norway. This was both a festive and gratifying occasion for it represented the coming of age of the Norwegian theatre; a theatre that has far less tradition behind it than those of its neighbors, Sweden and, especially, Denmark, whose famous Royal Theatre in Copenhagen celebrated its two hundredth anniversary in 1948.

Until the second quarter of the Nineteenth Century, except for an occasional visit from a Danish company, the very few Norwegians to whom the word "theatre" meant anything whatsoever, had to have their need for the art satisfied by amateur groups of the bourgeoisie. In 1827, a repertory theatre opened in Christiania (Oslo) with quite a few Danish actors in the company. Ole Bull (1810-1880), a world-famous violinist, was not happy about the continued Danish influence in the Christiania Theatre where he had once been the head of the orchestra, so he set to work to form an all-Norwegian theatre in Bergen. In 1850, inspired by Ole Bull's rich personality, the company formed that was later to be recognized as the founder of the independent Norwegian theatre.

Ole Bull's company attracted great interest and all went well while he remained at the helm, but when he returned to his music several talented actors soon went to Christiania. By 1863 there were not enough Norwegian actors to supply both theatres and the Danes once again took over the one in Bergen. This situation obtained until 1876 when the company that called itself *Den Nationale Scene* was established in the old house.

About the same time another all-Norwegian theatre saw the light of day, or rather, the light of gas flames, in the capital in opposition to the Christiania Theatre where the Danish language

was still being spoken. Interest in the art was to increase greatly in the years to come and soon the acting profession was entirely in Norwegian hands. In 1899, *National Teatret* opened in Oslo, and during the following thirty years, frequently called "The Golden Age of the Norwegian Stage," an unusual number of great actors, several new companies (some, unfortunately, short-lived), and a steadily increasing interest on the part of the audience, brought the Norwegian theatre up to the level where it was recognized as one of the best in Europe. Among those who contributed to this development were Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Henrik Ibsen, not only as playwrights but as active leaders of and directors at the two main theatres in Bergen and Christiania.

The centennial celebration was held at *Den Nationale Scene* whose building had replaced Ole Bull's theatre in 1909. The old and beautiful building was turned into a very interesting museum of the Norwegian theatre, but, unfortunately, the building was completely destroyed by a bomb during World War II. During the one week of celebration, plays were performed representing many Norwegian playwrights: Henrik Ibsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Ludwig Holberg, Amalie Skram, Nordahl Grieg and Bergen's very own Wiers-Jenssen. The only foreign playwrights represented were William Saroyan and Jean Anouilh.

Even when there is no particular celebration, an American visitor to Norway would find quite an active theatre life in the country. It may not be outstanding in any way, except perhaps for some of the Ibsen productions, for in my opinion Shakespeare is never played as well as in England, and so with Strindberg in Sweden, Molière in France, Chekhov in Russia, O'Neill in the United States, and Ibsen in Norway. Each nation seems to have in its own temper something specific which the writer expresses and only his countrymen can recreate.

One thing, however, would amaze the American in Norway. It is the proportion of the number of legitimate theatres to motion-picture houses here. In Oslo, with a population of nearly 400,000, there are only 20 motion-picture theatres but 5 legitimate theatres and 2 vaudeville houses. One reason for this may be that the towns and counties of Norway have a monopoly on the ownership and operation of motion-picture theatres while our legitimate theatres are all privately owned.

Before going into detail about our most representative theatre, The National Theatre, it might be of interest to stop a while to look at the Norwegian trade-union system. Besides the stage-hands' union, nearly all other crafts in the theatre are organized although most of the organizations do not belong to the nationwide labor union system. We have actors' unions, a theatre owners' and managers' association, a directors' association, etc. Recently they have combined within a new Norwegian Theatre Union which is a sub-division of the International Theatre Institute. Our unions, however, operate under conditions which differ radically, in two ways, from those in the United States and most other countries. First, all our theatres either own their houses or rent them on a more or less permanent basis and have their own personnel. Second, the actor cannot freelance because, through an agreement between the actors' union and the theatre owners' and managers' association, a "normal-contract" system has been formulated by which only out-of-town actors can be temporarily engaged. An actor's normal-contract includes all regulations and covers every eventuality: film and radio work, touring, personal appearances, etc. It gives the actor twelve months' work (September 1 through August 31) with six weeks' paid vacation. In this way an actor is paid whether he works or not during the season.

In order to secure a normal-contract a new young actor, who has graduated from an academy or in some other way has acquired the proper training, will be given an audition. If he is accepted, he is immediately given a normal-contract as an apprentice which secures a minimum salary for him. However, not until he has had five of these normal-contracts and signed a sixth will he be accepted as a member of *Norsk Skuespiller Forbund*, the Norwegian Actors Union, founded fifty-two years ago. The Union has this rule because it has a pension system and does not want young actors who may leave the stage after a couple of years. To protect the rights of the young actor during this period, there is the Young Actors Association which was formed in 1935. This Association is also a forum, holding monthly meetings, giving lectures, and providing a library.

At present there is no active academy of dramatic art in Nor-

way. Officially, there is a school at The National Theatre and one at The Norwegian Theatre, but because of finances they have to limit their activities to giving only their own apprentices further education and training. Therefore, most young people, whose aim is a career in the theatre, must study under private teachers and take various courses in physical training, that is, if they cannot afford to study abroad. The theatre organizations consider it their most important aim to have the Government subsidize an academy of dramatic arts at Oslo University, but with the present rearmament budget there seems to be very little hope for such an "extravagance."

The Norwegian normal-contract system will not only sound strange to the average American but, at first blush, will sound agreeable as well. There is no doubt that it has given the Norwegian actor social standing and security, rarely found in other countries. It also tends to keep the group together as a unit; many actors remain with the same company for ten years or a lifetime. It is interesting to note that outside The National Theatre in Oslo one can see, as far as I know, the only outdoor monument in the world of an actor. It is of Johannes Brun, one of the great, if not the greatest actor of "the golden age." Some of the actors of this age are still living; Johanne Dybwad, considered our greatest actress, died just recently. She was decorated with the highest order of the country, the Large Cross of St. Olav. Agnes Mowinckel, now seventy-six, can be ranked with our foremost directors. Recently, on her fiftieth anniversary as an actress, the youth among her audiences paid homage to her with a large torch-light procession.

The Norwegian actor appreciates the advantages his organizations have secured for him, but he is also clearly conscious of the drawbacks the system entails. For example, the salaries are smaller than those in other countries. An outstanding actor could naturally secure a higher income were he permitted to freelance. And productions often could be of a higher calibre if the producer were allowed to select his actors from other companies. It may happen that in a theatre where the majority of actors are young, a play can be cast except for the older lead, and that the ideal person for this role may be a member of the com-

pany across the street who is not being used at the particular time. However, he can only be employed by the other company under certain circumstances and with the union's permission. This problem has recently been a subject of lively discussion in the unions and it is likely that in the future the rules will be less strictly maintained.

All those connected with the Norwegian theatre encourage an international and especially an inter-Scandinavian exchange of companies, individual actors, and directors. Since the War this exchange has become very lively; there is a frequent exchange among the Royal Danish, the Royal Swedish, and the Norwegian National Theatre. Foreign directors have given to the Norwegian theatre many new impulses. It is hoped in Norway that the International Theatre Institute will organize an even more active co-operation among theatres of all countries.

Although the legitimate theatres in Norway are privately owned, some are subsidized by the state or community. Two of the five theatres in Oslo are subsidized. They have been incorporated with part of the stock held by the subsidizers. Also *Riksteatret*, a touring company, and the theatres in Bergen, Trondheim, and Stavanger are subsidized. During my visit to the United States in 1949 I received the impression that theatre people feared that government subsidizing of theatres would mean interference with the repertoire and some sort of censorship. Only once, except during the Nazi occupation of Norway, has the Government tried to do such a thing. This occurred before the War when, on the instigation of the Church, The National Theatre was asked to cancel its production of *The Green Pastures*. This request met with heavy criticism and has never been attempted again. After the War, this play was produced by The Norwegian Theatre and it met with no interference. All official theatre affairs are handled by the Department of Church and Education, which has a council of professionals connected with the theatre (*Statens Teaterraad*), and everything runs smoothly.

The National Theatre, as mentioned before, may be considered the most representative theatre in Norway. It is a private stock company whose subsidizers — the State and the City of Oslo — own part of the stock. The stockholders elect the head of the theatre and the board of directors. Approximately 100

people are engaged permanently by the theatre, about forty of whom are actors. The theatre has its own orchestra, the students from the school are, or rather were, used as extras, amateurs are also used in this capacity, and the theatre apprentices are bit-players.

Knut Hergel, an extremely competent director, is the present head of The National Theatre. In accordance with tradition, Mr. Hergel presents a repertory of alternating plays; classical and new Norwegian plays are performed as well as foreign ones. Usually, there is at least one new Ibsen production each year and often old productions are revived. There are a number of directors and set designers under contract to the theatre, but guest directors and designers are engaged more often than guest actors.

The Norwegian Theatre (*Det Norske Teatret*) is set up similarly, but it is also subsidized by those interested in the movement for the New Norwegian Language which is a synthesis of several different country dialects and less under the influence of Danish than the language spoken in the larger cities. All performances are given in New-Norwegian, and the theatre is well known for its advanced style in dramatic art.

The former head of The Norwegian Theatre, Hans Jacob Nilsen, presented a rather startling *Peer Gynt*, which he also directed and starred in. It was quite revolutionary. He had new music composed for it, and the production can be characterized by the title of the book he published at the same time — *Peer Gynt, An Anti-romantic Play*. It was presented in opposition to The National Theatre's rather conventional production of the play which, with Grieg's beautiful but romantic music, folk dances and national scenery, gave the audience a pleasant but false feeling of identification with the "hero." The Nilsen production has visited a number of European countries.

The New Theatre (*Det Nye Teater*) is incorporated and privately financed. It opened in 1929. This theatre had a long low period, but recently, under the leadership of Axel Otto Normann, who for many years headed The National Theatre, it has again approached the standards of its opening years, at which time some of the best talent in the Norwegian theatre made it the home of good modern drama.

*Central Teatret* is a privately owned and non-subsidized com-



pany. Its fare consists largely of lighter plays and musicals, usually very well performed by a competent group of actors.

It is sad to have to include a necrology when writing of the current Norwegian theatre, but there is no choice. During the War young actors were not allowed to work professionally unless they first joined the Nazified academy. So a group of young people worked underground with the guidance of the best directors. They tried to adapt the Stanislavski system of acting and when the War ended they opened their own little theatre, the *Studio-teatret*. It was owned and operated by the actors who each year elected their board and their leader from the group. With the assistance of fine foreign and Norwegian directors, the little theatre created productions of high quality. They presented American and French modern playwrights along with the best dramatic literature from Russia, China, Germany, Sweden, and Norway. Their youthful enthusiasm gave their performances a special charm.

But after some years there happened to this group of idealists what has happened so often before. They started to worry about their individual careers; they broke up into cliques and intrigues developed. The internal dissension could soon be seen in their performances. The most talented actors left for other theatres and, despite the rare good-will they had had, their audience began losing interest in the theatre. The financial situation, always weak, now became critical. They received support from Oslo city and tried to organize a very interesting subscription system with the workers in industry in order to bring a new audience to their theatre. Through this system, the worker at the beginning of the year had to pay only 40 per cent of the regular price of a season ticket; his employer or organization would contribute 30 per cent; and the remaining 30 per cent would be discount allowed by the theatre. In my opinion this plan was a fine one and could have worked out wonderfully, but the theatre's urgent need precluded the development of the system and as all kinds of lotteries, drives, and benefits had already been tried, the theatre was forced to wind up its affairs in February of this year.

The energetic head of The New Theatre took over the stage and engaged several of the young actors from the defunct group. Thus The New Theatre now has two permanent stages and it is

hoped that this will make an interesting experimental repertoire possible. Perhaps, in the long run, a success will result from failure.

In the three next largest cities of Norway — Bergen, Trondheim, and Stavanger — the permanent State and City subsidized theatres are operated along the same lines as those in Oslo. Their standards are proportionately high, and they enjoy the love and interest of large audiences.

In 1948, *Stortinget*, the Norwegian Parliament, passed a law that made *Riksteatret* a reality. This is a non-profit enterprise that brings the theatre to all the small towns and villages only occasionally visited by road companies. These road companies have often been of very low calibre and fortunately grow fewer each year. The *Riksteatret* has its own staff of actors and tours the country the whole season. It also organizes tours which the State-subsidized theatres are obliged to carry out, and it sends the New Norwegian Ballet out on the road once or twice a year. In 1950, the first year that the theatre operated on a large scale, 571 performances were given at 256 places. Besides a number of classical and modern Scandinavian plays, *Riksteatret's* vast audience has seen in the past year two one-act plays by J. M. Synge, Chekhov's *The Proposal*, Robert Ardrey's *Thunder Rock*, Wilder's *Our Town*, Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. The tours are made by *Riksteatret's* own bus or station-wagon and a truck, carrying all scenery and lighting equipment. The tours go into the wild northern parts; often everything has to be put aboard a fisher-boat to reach the small communities on the many islands. The *Riksteatret* is closest to what the American National Theatre hopes to be — not a theatre for the capital alone, but for the whole country.

While the people in the outlying parts of Norway have the *Riksteatret's* tours to look forward to, the audience in Oslo is looking toward 1952 when The Peoples' Theatre (*Folketeatret*) will open. Some twenty years ago, The Peoples' Theatre Organization was formed with large contributions from private and official sources. A couple of years later a huge theatre in the center of Oslo was finished. The theatre contained 1,200 seats, had an experimental stage, and some 100 rooms of office space. When construction was completed there was no money left to start the

theatre, so the auditorium was rented for motion pictures. The Organization arranged to perform at other theatres at reduced rates for its 10,000 individual and 100,000 co-operative members. Today the rent from the building, which also houses two newspaper presses, has mounted to a large fortune. The auditorium and the stage are presently under reconstruction so that the building can revert to its original purpose. When it opens it will have a staff of some fifty actors and a modern stage with the best technical devices available. Nilsen will head the new theatre. The rent from the building and the low yearly dues of the members will make it possible to sell all seats at a very low price.

Before closing I would like to mention the theatre fare in Oslo during the 1950 season. Twenty-eight foreign and seventeen Norwegian playwrights were represented. Eleven of the Norwegians are contemporary. The most important of the foreign plays were by Shakespeare, Sheridan, Shaw, Chekhov, Federico García Lorca, Pär Lagerquist, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Sean O'Casey, Christopher Fry, Jean Paul Sartre, Jean Giraudoux, Jean Genet, Jean Anouilh, Marcel Aymé, and Georges Neveux. Ibsen was represented by four plays and Björnson and Holberg by one each.

The repertoire also included musicals and opera. There was Leo Stein and Bela Jenbach's operetta *Czardas* and the Kern-Hammerstein *Show Boat*. As there is no permanent opera in Oslo, The National Theatre performed Verdi's *La Traviata* and The New Theatre gave an exciting production of Menotti's *The Medium* and *The Telephone* with the American singer, Anne Brown, now married and living in Norway.

By the time this article appears the reader may have seen some of the foregoing productions and perhaps some of the 1951 productions, because a careful selection is being made of them for presentation at various theatres during the International Theatre Institute's Congress in Oslo in the summer of 1951. Theatre workers in Norway will be very happy to have the opportunity of greeting foreign theatre people on this occasion, and it is our sincere hope that not only the Congress itself, but also the festivals being arranged at the theatres, and the large exhibition of scene designs and models will turn out to be a great success.

Aside from the hope for the fulfillment of the International Theatre Institute's promises, we have two main wishes for the future: more and better Norwegian drama, and, as previously mentioned, a real theatre academy where young actors can be trained in the difficult techniques their art requires.

As this article is intended to give a survey of the organization of the Norwegian theatre, I have not spoken in detail of its artistic qualities. This will be left to the reader's own judgment when he visits our country. He will be very welcome!

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## GOETHE'S IDEAL SPECTATOR

by

ALOIS M. NAGLER

Looking back from Weimar to his own beginnings and to those of his fellow writers, Goethe, on several occasions, recalled the social conditions a German poet had had to face. In Goethe's eyes, the strongest factor hampering the free development of a poet was the low social position he was forced to occupy unless he were of noble birth or the son of a prosperous merchant. A poor mortal, alone conscious of his mental and creative abilities, had "to drag himself painfully through life and, pressed by a momentary need, to waste the gifts he may have received from the Muses. In society, a poet appeared the most wretched subordinate, a jester and a parasite, so that on the stage, as in life, he cut a figure that might be maltreated as one liked."<sup>1</sup> Nowhere was there a centre for the development of intellectual life, where writers might meet and associate with each other, each in his own field, in one way and in one spirit:

Scattered by their places of birth, educated in the most diverse manner, generally left to themselves and to the impressions of quite varying environments, seized by a predilection for one example or another of native or foreign literature, forced to make all kinds of attempts and even blunders in order, without directives, to test their own powers; convinced only gradually, by reflection, of what should be done, instructed by experience of what can be done; confused ever anew by a large public devoid of taste, which swallowed the bad after the good with the same delight; then encouraged again by acquaintance with the educated, who were, however, dispersed through all parts of the Reich. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Such was the discouraging prospect that lay before a German writer.

The first German poet to achieve dignified independence was Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803). Goethe and his

<sup>1</sup> Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben, Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Weimar Edition, I, 27, 295.

<sup>2</sup> Goethe, *Literarischer Sansculottismus*, W. E., I, 40, 199.

friends rejoiced at the news that Klopstock's poetic accomplishments had been recognized and that he had been summoned by the Margrave Karl of Baden "in order, by his presence, to communicate grace and profit to higher society."<sup>3</sup> The Count of Lippe and the Landgravine Karoline of Hesse-Darmstadt likewise set a good example of literary patronage. Other courts gradually fell in line, led by the court of Brunswick, where, at the Collegium Carolinum, Friedrich Adolph Ebert, the translator of Edward Young, and Johann Eschenburg, the translator of Shakespeare, taught. Anna Amalia came to Weimar from Brunswick. She called Christoph Martin Wieland and Karl Ludwig von Knebel to Weimar, and, in turn, Knebel introduced Goethe to Duke Karl August.

When Goethe compared the situation at the end of the century with that of the middle, he was happy to record a decided improvement. No longer did youthful talent have to stumble along in obscurity; a gifted writer could early join a congenial circle. Something had arisen that Goethe once called an "invisible school,"<sup>4</sup> a republic of those creating and those receiving, a state knowing no castes, something comparable to the French *empire de l'opinion publique*.

In his youth, Goethe did not envisage a public. He wrote for a few people only, for his friends and the girls he loved. He once called this his idyllic epoch: "Relationships are most intimate, only the friend is trusted, only the beloved is addressed in song." This naïve and trusting communication with the reader may well be a characteristic of rococo literature, as Sommerfeld believes,<sup>5</sup> though we cannot overlook the fact that Goethe sent the printer a work even as anti-rococo as the *Götz* in the hope "that my friends, of whom I have so many in this wide world, would have a more pleasant remembrance of me than if I had conducted a long and important correspondence with them." In the next phase — Goethe called it the social-civic — his range of appeal extended beyond the narrow circle of friends to the broader literary community. Although this community was still limited, it had already established connections with other circles who had grouped them-

<sup>3</sup> Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben*, I, 28, 112.

<sup>4</sup> Goethe, *Literarischer Sansculottismus*, I, 40, 202.

<sup>5</sup> M. Sommerfeld, *Goethe in Umwelt und Folgezeit* (Leiden 1935), p. 218.

selves round marked literary personalities such as Klopstock, Herder, and Wieland, whom Goethe at one time called "small cosmic systems."<sup>6</sup> A state of "aristocratic anarchy" ruled. Each poet sought to found his own school: "Very many were seized simultaneously by the same spirit, they recognized each other's achievements, they esteemed one another and felt the need of union; they sought and loved one another, and yet no true unity could arise."<sup>7</sup> But, fortunately, the "more general epoch" had dawned; an epoch in which the collaboration of Goethe and Schiller at Weimar could bear fruit. Yet, not even this centre of cultural forces was able to create the magnetic attraction and achieve the widespread influence of a city like Paris, which was so enviously regarded by the aging Goethe. In his closing years he was forced to admit that, although great strides had been made in Germany, good intellects remained dispersed throughout the land, each one still leading a basically isolated existence.

The German theatre, Goethe felt, did not enjoy an organic development. Its real home was in southern Germany and in Austria. Had the theatre been fortunate enough to march on from there without interference, it might "in spite of all have developed into something right and strong."<sup>8</sup> But the protestant North gained the upper hand, and "shallow men, incapable of any productiveness," carried out the work of reform in Leipzig, "a place of very rigid protestant customs," which became the starting point for the taming of the German stage. Subsequently, Hamburg clergymen declared war on the theatre. Coming to its defense, the lovers of the stage had to pretend "that an institution, actually dedicated to higher sensualism, was a moral institution." The result was that playwrights worked towards that aim with a righteous mind, not noticing that they were merely continuing Gottsched's mediocrity.<sup>9</sup>

Goethe also thought the moral turn taken by the German theatre was due, in part, to the solemnity of the German people; they were serious and remained so even at play.<sup>10</sup> He, therefore,

<sup>6</sup> Goethe, *Tag- und Jahreshefte* (1794), W. E., I, 35, 39.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben*, I, 28, 148.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Alois M. Nagler, "German Audiences in the Eighteenth Century," *Theatre Annual*, 1950, pp. 33-37.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Goethe, *Weimarisches Hoftheater* (1802), W. E., I, 40, 82.

welcomed plays "which serve to remind the spectator that the whole essence of the theatre is play, and that he must stand above it, without enjoying it any less on that account, if he is to be benefited esthetically, or, indeed, morally."<sup>11</sup> It was in Italy that Goethe had experienced the theatre as an institution devoted to higher sensualism, and he touched upon the character of Apollonian<sup>12</sup> artistic enjoyment when he recorded his impressions at a performance of Carlo Goldoni's *La Locandiera* (*The Mistress of the Inn*) in Rome.<sup>13</sup> His initial surprise at seeing men play women's parts disappeared in the course of the performance:

I experienced a pleasure I had never felt before and noticed that many others shared it with me. I reflected on the reason for it and think I found it in the fact that, in such a presentation, the notion of imitation, the idea of art, remained vivid and that the skilful acting produced a kind of self-conscious illusion.

The young man, who played Mirandolina, did not offer an actual portrayal, but rather presented the result of an act of thinking, or, of an observation: "As this, fundamentally, distinguishes all art from simple mimicry, it is natural that we should experience a peculiar kind of pleasure at such presentation." The spectator's mind was not set agog; he was not swept away by violent impressions; he retained his freedom. Goethe experienced the "esthetic performance" which Schiller later tried to create synthetically by introducing the chorus in his *Bride of Messina*.

Upon his return from Italy, Goethe looked with disgust at the crude realism that had invaded the German stage. His contemporaries were busily occupied with "making illusion real, until at last only a vulgar reality remained as a residuum." This realism had been imported from France, where Diderot and Beaumarchais had attacked the ideality of the stage, something which the French themselves had finally achieved only after great effort. Goethe deplored this state of affairs:

The stage, as an ideal place [*ideelles Lokal*], had reached the highest advantage by applying the laws of perspective to wings placed one behind the other, and now they wished willfully to abandon this progress, to shut in the sides of the stage and form real walls. The play

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>12</sup> For the terminology see Nagler, *loc. cit.*, Foreword, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> See Goethe, *Frauenrollen auf dem römischen Theater durch Männer gespielt* (1788), W. E., I, 47, 269-274.



itself, the acting, in short, everything was to conform with such stage setting and thence a wholly new theatre to arise.<sup>14</sup>

Thus Goethe rejected the box set, which, in his eyes, could give pleasure only to the uneducated who confused a work of art with a work of nature. Admittedly, a work of art, as a product of the human mind, is also a work of nature, but it transcends nature because the human mind has made a selection from nature and submitted the raw material to a refining process.

In an important dialogue,<sup>15</sup> Goethe distinguished three classes of playgoers. On the lowest level there was the "uneducated spectator," who mistakes a work of art for a work of nature: "He will be content only as long as the artist condescends to him; he will never raise himself with the true artist." On a distinctly higher level is the "average theatre lover." Yet even he lacks reverence for a work of art; he treats it like an object to be found "in the market place." On the highest level stands the "true connoisseur," the cultured citizen of the world; the man who has led a great and variegated existence and is able to grasp the things of the mind. He can appreciate the excellence of a careful choice, the skill in composition, the sublimity of the work of art. He realizes that he must raise himself to the artist's plane in order to enjoy the work; that he must compose himself in the midst of a scattered existence; that he must live with the work of art, observing it constantly, and thereby create for himself a higher existence. A homogeneous group of such true connoisseurs would be Goethe's ideal theatre audience.

Fortunately for Goethe, the Weimar theatre public had a good reputation even before he took over the management in 1791. The conditions upon which he could continue to build are described in a Berlin periodical of 1785:

The drama is included among the manifold pleasures which one can enjoy in Weimar and which give this small city an advantage over so many larger ones in Germany. Here, more than anywhere else, is the drama loved, and the theatre is very well attended. Since the time of Koch, Weimar had possessed a good theatre, and this explains why, in respect to the stage as well as in respect to various other things, the more cultured part of the population had developed a really good and

<sup>14</sup> Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben*, I, 28, 65.

<sup>15</sup> Goethe, *Ueber Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit der Kunstwerke* (1797), W. E., I, 47, 257-266.

solid taste, which gradually spread to the lower classes. Consequently, a very poor company could achieve success nowhere less than here, for although it would be assured against the danger of being hooted off the stage — since such freedom was never allowed here — yet in a very short time the attendance would fall off considerably. Nowhere, however, can a better company develop from a poor one in a shorter period than in Weimar. For, aside from the fact that every single actor must of necessity exert all his strength while playing before a crowd of people who have seen the best in Germany, he has also to fear the criticism of the experts whose opinions carry great weight with the public in Weimar, as well as with that in all Germany.<sup>16</sup>

Goethe's Weimar court theatre appealed to a cultural elite, a well-balanced fusion of middle-class and aristocratic elements, and thus closely resembled the audience coalition of French classicism, *la cour et la ville*. In Weimar — this hybrid village and courtly residence, where there were ten thousand poets and just a few inhabitants — there could not be, as Goethe pointed out to Eckermann, on April 27, 1825, much talk of the common people. The management must be pleased that it need not deal with those "who push unprepared toward the theatre, demanding something they can enjoy without effort. The rabble wants to gape and weep and thus compels the manager to stoop to its level."<sup>17</sup> During the summer seasons in Lauchstädt, Goethe found himself face to face with his ideal audience: "We had to play before a small, sufficiently instructed audience, whose taste we could satisfy, while retaining our own independence. We could even make a few attempts at educating ourselves and our public in a higher sense."<sup>18</sup> In the fall, Goethe's company would return to Weimar and play for a more general audience: nobility in the boxes, prosperous, middle-class people and students in the pit, servants and young craftsmen in the gallery. "It had confidence in our management," Goethe said, giving the Weimar audience an excellent testimonial, "it was always convinced, even if unable to make anything of it, that whatever we did or refrained from doing was based on a higher motive."<sup>19</sup> Spectators, who were still somewhat bewildered after the first performance of a difficult play, appeared at the next performance in order better

<sup>16</sup> *Ephemeriden der Litteratur und des Theaters* (Berlin 1785), I, 20, 316-318.

<sup>17</sup> Goethe, *Weimarisches Hoftheater*, I, 40, 78.

<sup>18</sup> Goethe, *Tag- und Jahreshefte* (1797), W. E., I, 35, 76 f.

<sup>19</sup> Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann*, July 26, 1826.

to instruct themselves. Since Goethe was in a position to offer plays that would please only an intellectual elite, he could, with a clear conscience, put on others more suited to a general taste. He tried to develop a catholicity in his audience. The playgoer was to learn that a play was not to be regarded "as a coat that had to be fitted on the spectator's body and in accordance with his momentary needs."<sup>20</sup> Goethe liked to view the perfect playgoer as a traveller who took pleasure in strange countries and who, for this pleasure, was ready to put up with some inconveniences that demanded a certain adaptability.

Goethe warned theatre managers against an attitude of weakness and indulgence toward the public, but he also stressed that managers "must allow for the actual notions of their audience." He realized the need of clearing a path for the public toward works not likely to be understood, and only on rare occasions did he conduct experiments that could be expected to arouse antagonism. Every direction he gave during rehearsals was designed to have a specific effect upon the spectator, whom he regarded as the chief personage in the theatre. Whatever he did in the training of his actors was ultimately for the benefit of the audience. He impressed upon them that they should recite their lines facing the audience, not with their backs to it. There was no Fourth Wall to the Weimar stage, and the actor was constantly being reminded that he was acting for an audience.

In 1800, Goethe had seen several performances in Leipzig and had been shocked by the realistic acting style prevailing there. He subscribed to the comment of a Viennese lady who complained that the actors in Leipzig behaved as if there were no spectators present. The same state of affairs was to be found in Berlin. When the Weimar actor, Pius Alexander Wolff, and his wife performed there, they reported to Goethe:

Before our arrival the public had heard no proper declamation on the stage. Actors and audiences continually grumble about the size of the house, about an echo and the difficulty of understanding what is said on the stage, and they are surprised that we, with vocal organs much weaker than those of most actors here, can speak so clearly and distinctly.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *Weimarisches Hoftheater*, I, 40, 79.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted by J. Wahle, *Das Weimarer Hoftheater unter Goethes Leitung* (Weimar 1892), p. 185.

Not in vain had Goethe admonished his actors not to act among themselves, out of a falsely understood realism, as though no third party were present. His school had borne fruit, at least in the case of Wolff, his favorite disciple.

Goethe's and Schiller's interest in opera is intimately associated with their Apollonian convictions. Schiller "always had a certain confidence in opera."<sup>22</sup> Opera guaranteed an ennobled form of artistic enjoyment, it prepared the listener "for finer receptivity through the power of music; here a freer style of acting is possible, even at the height of pathos, because it is accompanied by music." And opera had long employed those conventions and "symbolic devices" through which Schiller hoped to overcome the vulgar imitation of nature.<sup>23</sup> Opera, then, was given a commanding position in Goethe's Weimar repertory.

In Goethe's conversations with Schiller, and later with Eckermann, audience-repertory relation was repeatedly discussed. There were many ideas, however, which Goethe was never able to put into practice. Schiller had first conceived the idea of building a theatre for tragedy only. He felt that in this way the public might be able to judge with greater clarity the functions of the various dramatic forms. The audience was bound to become confused when, on the same stage, *Hamlet* was given today, a popular comedy tomorrow, *Die Zauberflöte* the day after, and finally, perhaps, *Das neue Sonntagskind*. Goethe welcomed the proposal,<sup>24</sup> although he realized that the idea could not be carried out in a small town like Weimar. Schiller had also suggested that once a week a performance should be given for men only. In Berlin Heinrich von Kleist had had a similar idea, when he suggested a theatre for women only.<sup>25</sup> Goethe wished to exclude young girls from the auditorium. Eckermann remarked that Molière presumably represented too coarse a fare for the average playgoer of the Eighteen Twenties, and Goethe asked in reply:

What are our young girls doing in the theater? They have no business there. They should be in a convent, and the theater is merely

<sup>22</sup> Schiller's letter to Goethe on December 29, 1797.

<sup>23</sup> See K. Burdach, "Schillers Chordrama und die Geburt des tragischen Stils aus der Musik," in *Vorspiel II, Goethe und sein Zeitalter* (Halle 1926), pp. 214 f.

<sup>24</sup> *Conversations with Eckermann*, March 30, 1824.

<sup>25</sup> Wilhelm von Scholz ed., *Kleist, Grillparzers, Immermanns und Grabbes Dramaturgie* (Munich 1912), pp. 36-37.

for men and women who are acquainted with human affairs. When Molière was working for the stage, the girls were in a convent, and he had to make no allowances for them.<sup>26</sup>

On another occasion Goethe regretted that a play which had been long rehearsed was usually performed but once or twice, and that even between repetitions, six or eight weeks elapsed. He pointed to Italy where an opera was given every evening for several weeks. He cited France, where the cultured Parisian might listen to plays of the classical repertoire so frequently that he learned them by heart. Goethe's *Iphigenie* and *Tasso* had been given in Weimar, but how often? "Hardly once in three or four years. The public finds them boring. The actors have no practice in acting these plays, and the public is not trained in listening to them."<sup>27</sup> Goethe's counsel, then, was to perform a play or opera at short intervals for as long as the house was well filled. Only in this way could the actor or singer remain the master of his part, and only when the performer had this assurance could the spectator feel at home in the playhouse.

Goethe's training of the Weimar public did not progress without resistance or without relapse. This is indicated by his warning, distributed to the prospective subscribers of 1801:

Several unpleasant occurrences of the past year compel the management to announce that no one, whether by subscribing or by paying at the box office, acquires the right to behave as he likes in the auditorium. He who enters must rather convince himself that he has been received in good society, where the bad manners of the rabble, that must be suffered in larger towns, will by no means be tolerated. All improper behavior is therefore expressly forbidden, that is, laughing at an actor because of some personal embarrassment, the mocking of the same by untimely and exaggerated clapping, disapproval shown by stamping, hissing while others applaud, noisy talk during the intermission and, in general, everything that etiquette forbids anyone who finds himself in the company of his betters or of his own kind.

To lend force to his demands, Goethe employed soldiers to hold the pit under observation and stationed a policeman in the gallery. Nor did he hesitate to reprove, in person and during a

<sup>26</sup> *Conversations with Eckermann*, January 29, 1826.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, March 27, 1825. For the theatrical battle which Goethe and Schiller fought against the spirit of their age see A. Bettex, *Der Kampf um das klassische Weimar* (Zurich 1935), *passim*.

performance, reactions of the audience which did not conform to his artistic program or credo. The introduction of a theatre guard served to control the students who came to Weimar from Jena. They formed an important element of the Weimar audiences: "The theatre would particularly suffer," wrote a contemporary source, "if the students did not come to Weimar. Without their presence the house would often be half empty."<sup>28</sup> These students swarmed through the streets of Weimar and, at first, showed the same lack of constraint in the auditorium. Goethe succeeded in having them remove their large hats in the theatre, but they still expressed their approval or dislike as emphatically as possible. They also caused trouble for the management by forcing their way into the *parterre noble*. Even Duke Karl August was once challenged to a duel by an aristocratic student, when two women of doubtful reputation, in whose company the student had appeared, were refused admission to the seats reserved for the nobility. Goethe, for whom these "passionately demanding youths" had had importance as a sounding board for Schiller's tragedies, soon learned the mechanics of the student troubles; he discovered that the riots were always instigated by a few. Here was his procedure: "If the crowd is to be kept in peace, one must not stand for the first sign of bad conduct; if anyone should begin to make noise, he must be warned and, if he should then continue, be dragged out."<sup>29</sup>

Goethe's connection with the Weimar court theatre ended in 1817. An actor, who travelled with a play in which a trained poodle was starred, had asked permission to present the dog's tricks on Goethe's stage. He objected to this profanation, but Duke Karl August, a dog fancier, insisted on the production. Whereupon Goethe in part resigned and in part received his dismissal. For three decades he had worked for the ennoblement of the Weimar court theatre. A poodle and the intrigues of a pretty actress, who happened to be the Duke's mistress, brought about his fall. Unquestionably the theatre took revenge on literature.

When Goethe retired from the management, he left with the uneasy feeling of not having attained his goal. The anti-theatrical

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Bruno Th. Satori-Neumann, *Die Frühzeit des Weimarer Hoftheaters unter Goethes Leitung* (Berlin 1922), p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Goethe, Letter no. 3567 (June 6, 1797), W. E., IV, 12.

pronouncements of the *Wanderjahre*<sup>30</sup> have their roots in this disappointment. So also have his various expressions of mistrust of the theatre as a dualistic art form in his conversations with Eckermann:

I once really deluded myself into thinking that it might be possible to found a German theater. Yes, I even deluded myself into thinking I might have contributed something and laid a few foundation stones to such a building. I wrote my *Iphigenie* and my *Tasso* and thought with childish hopefulness that that would help. But nothing moved, and everything remained as before. If I had had success and had won applause, I would have written you a full dozen plays like *Iphigenie* and *Tasso*. There was no shortage of material, but the actors were lacking to represent such things with spirit and life, and the public was lacking to hear and receive such things with sensitiveness.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Wilhelm Meister, having recovered from the theatrical mania of his youth, visits the Pedagogic Province and is surprised to learn that this ideal community of Goethe's has no playhouse. When a natural mimic talent appears among the inhabitants of Goethe's Utopia, this histrionic specimen is offered to the great theatres "so that he speedily be conducted, like a duck on the pond, to his future life of waddling and quacking on the boards." (Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, W. E., I, 25/1, 21).

<sup>31</sup> *Conversations with Eckermann*, March 27, 1825.

# TRYOUT: THE PLAYWRIGHTS' THEATRE

by

GLADYS FERRIER SAVAGE

In the late spring of 1943 twelve people met in a home in Seattle to discuss a manuscript play. They stayed to found a theatre. At the time, except for the professional theatre in New York, there was no drama organization concerning itself exclusively with the manuscript play. Concern for play and playwright was not new — it had always been a part of the history of the theatre — but with the concentration of the professional theatre on Broadway, the policy had developed in the college and community theatres of re-producing hits rather than producing new, or untried, plays. Then, suddenly, in the corner of these United States farthest from Broadway, Tryout Theatre appeared and prospered. Now in 1951, just eight years later, Tryout has changed from a producing group to a sponsoring organization. Therefore, it is a fitting moment to review the past history of this revolutionary theatre; to wonder how it grew without the support of an existing organization or foundation; to consider the manner of people who made it possible.

The twelve who met at the home of George Savage on May 8, 1943 could not understand why a good play should have only a reading, particularly at a time when trained actors, directors, and designers, drawn to Seattle by the War, were, in their minds at least, still living in a world where life begins at 8:40. So they did something about it. In less than ten weeks after that meeting, Tryout Theatre, Inc. had been organized and incorporated, a playhouse had been found, and *Blue Alert* had its première.

Among the founders of Tryout were people from university and college theatres throughout the nation. Some were working in shipyards and many at the Boeing Aircraft plant; some, in addition to their various careers, were Air Raid Wardens, Airplane Spotters, Red Cross volunteers, teachers in the V-12 Navy Program, actors with the Seattle War Commission Players, and



Child Welfare workers. All were alike, however, in their burning love of the theatre.

These theatre lovers began with the premise that each year Tryout could find six or eight produceable plays in manuscript. This confidence was well founded, for Seattle had long been acclaimed a major center of creative writing by editors from the East, and it is well known that a city that emphasizes an art always attracts practitioners. Actually, only two of the plays presented in the first season were written by authors concerned only with playwriting. Fiction and non-fiction writers turned to playwriting because there was a theatre ready to consider new plays. When news of Tryout was bruited about, playwrights hurried to Seattle. One young man left Paris, after having completed an Army assignment, passed up his home in New York City, and came to work at Tryout; another read of the theatre while in the South Pacific and came to Seattle rather than return to his home in Michigan.

Writers' organizations and published and unpublished writers in all fields also took a healthy interest in the new theatre. Some writers took out life memberships while others furnished autographed copies of their books as awards for the best written criticism of a play. Memberships came from many of the States; editors, authors' representatives, lawyers, and producing groups wished to help a theatre that had such a warm sweeping belief in its own destiny.

Looking back on the early days of Tryout, it would seem to have been a brash assumption that plays could be found worth presenting before a paying audience. For when *Blue Alert*, the first and only scheduled production, went into rehearsal the authors were still writing the last act. But the enthusiasm with which the idea of the theatre had been received made the members visualize Seattle in 1943 as a place where nothing was impossible. They never questioned the existence of an audience eager to attend premières, indifferent to the fact that there had been no Broadway testing. Nor did they doubt that a playhouse could be found. But most incredible of all, Tryout blithely assumed that in a city of rationing, shortages, and overtime work a theatre could rely on volunteer help for everything that goes into a successful production: actors, costumes, rehearsals, publicity, pro-

grams, janitor work, script typing, box-office personnel. Over the years Tryout has proved this could be done.

Tryout started with few rules — there were no by-laws until 1945 and even then a production of a play took precedence over parliamentary procedure — but there were inviolable principles in the theatre. It was a playwrights' theatre, and all decisions had to be referred back to the playwright. There was a careful reading and evaluation of plays before one was selected for production. The theatre agreed that, if no good play was available, production would be postponed until one appeared. Sometimes the timing has been split-second, but always from somewhere a script has come which the Board could recommend and a director would agree to stage. At the conclusion of each night's performance, with few exceptions, the audience was asked to remain for discussion. At the end of the run, members of Tryout and the cast analyzed the play. When a playwright could not be present, the evaluation was mailed to him.

There was still another policy. A season of plays was selected without a balanced program in mind, but with the resolve to do a play when it needed to be done. If three tragedies came in a row, fine. The theatre would do three tragedies. If there were frothy, light, commercial plays that merited production, the theatre would brave the charge of concerning itself only with the inconsequential and evanescent. The result of this policy has been interesting. In Tryout's fifty productions, the plays have been almost equally divided between serious plays and comedies and farces. No closet drama has been produced. The hits — plays whose runs had to be extended — have been equally divided between serious and light plays. All the tragedies, however, have had "Standing Room Only."

To carry out the policies of the theatre, the members elected a board with one third of its members to be retired each year. It was voted, however, that George Savage should be the permanent member of the Board. He is the one person who carries the continuity from the first meeting to the present time. In 1947, after a remodeling problem had been solved by a bank loan, the membership decided to add some business men to the Board who would concern themselves with the wise financial operation of the theatre. Active members continued to be responsible for

the selection of plays and production, and all decisions remained with the entire Board.

From the beginning committees were formed that had a Board member as Chairman or Supervisor. The number of committees varied from year to year, but always there was a committee on Play Selection, on Directors and Actors, on Technical Problems, on Box-Office and Front of the House, on Publicity and Promotion, on Budget, and on Membership.

It was agreed to draw up articles of incorporation at once. Although no production had yet occurred, suddenly it became important for everyone to be a founding member. As of July 6, 1943, there were thirty-four. Eight of these were in, or soon to be in, the Armed Forces. They asked for membership in order to affiliate themselves with the theatre they wanted "to come home to." This Service number increased, constituting about one third of the total membership. *Tryout Times*, newsletter of Tryout, found its way to every theatre of War, and to battleships, cruisers, and destroyers on both oceans. Six of the servicemen sent in \$100 for life memberships, but two proved to be Memorial Memberships, for Gordon Fox was killed in the Philippines and Merle Massar sacrificed his life in bringing down a burning bomber so that a little New England village would not be hit even though the order had been given to bail out. One day a navy lieutenant walked up to the Advanced Writing Department, placed a check for \$100 before the startled secretary, and said, "Tryout must need something extra by now." It took Tryout many months to find an address to acknowledge this gift.

Tryout started in a little sixty-two-seat theatre at 1316 42nd Street, two blocks from the University of Washington Campus. It was only a short distance from the two University theatres — Showboat and Penthouse — and the Seattle Repertory Theatre. The playhouse, originally called The Studio Theatre, had been built for the use of the School of Drama. It had been released to the owner when Showboat opened. Only the downstairs, consisting of box-office, foyer, auditorium, stage, and small workshop, was available, for the upstairs was occupied by the Canterbury Club, a campus religious group.

*Blue Alert* had its première on August 2, 1943. It was sched-

uled for one week, but the run was extended to two; *Day of a Faun*, scheduled for two, ran for three; and *Endure the Night*, scheduled for three, continued to draw full houses for four. Finally, the theatre settled down to a Thursday, Friday, Saturday schedule for a six-week period. The first three days of the week were used to rehearse the next play and for special rehearsals when an author decided to rewrite a scene or an act.

Ideally, the author received pictures of the production, the director's script, clippings from the press, and copies of the program. "Ideally" is used advisedly because on occasion a volunteer worker in charge of publicity would move during the run of a play and fail to arrange for someone else to secure the complete record for the playwright. Directors would hold on to their prompt copies so tenaciously that finally the Board had to secure an assistant director to make a detailed copy of the action for the author.

In many other ways Tryout has been steadfast in feeling that it wanted to aid the playwright. It wanted to help, not profit from his need. Although the theatre could not act as his agent, it could assist him in the future marketing of his play. Plays often have had such future history. Two were staged professionally, several had options held for Broadway production; about one in every seven has been accepted by the American Educational Theatre Association's Manuscript Play Project, and at least half have been selected for presentation by other college and community theatres. But Tryout has been firm: the author permits production of his play, but retains all other rights. Tryout gives the best production possible with the full record of its reception, and, in every way it can, it promotes the play that has had a successful production at Tryout.

Reservations for *Blue Alert* were taken by a long-suffering volunteer who gave permission to use her telephone. Though announcements suggested a call only at designated hours, the telephone rang throughout the twenty-four. This inconvenience added to the cramped space in the lower floor of the theatre soon made it apparent that expansion was in order. The program for the third production solemnly announced that the theatre was so successful it seemed the time to expand. The quarters above the theatre were remodeled to be made available for membership

and Board meetings, for conferences between the playwright and the director and designer, and for other theatre business.

The lower floor had cost only \$15 a month, but the entire space increased the rent to \$60. At first Tryout thought it might rent the redecorated rooms as an apartment, but the telephone and dozens of other problems demanded a theatre representative on the premises. Even with rent free and the housing shortage there were no volunteers for the job. Finally, the staff secretary was talked into moving in. She was told of the pleasure she and her friends would have if they left their unimaginative boarding house and moved into a quaint, atmospheric apartment with assured privacy. All they would have to do would be to answer the 'phone (paid for by the theatre) and take reservations. No one told them, or perhaps no one noticed, that the theatre had no bathtub; that the adjoining restaurant attracted rats; and that the circulating oil heater added upstairs was temperamental. No one told them that the large green and white stripes of the living room walls with the rose-colored curtains would not ever become monotonous, for on and off the curtains would be borrowed for a production. Red velvet curtains would replace them one month and perhaps muslin yardage, tacked up temporarily, the next. The chairs and tables would be exchanged for others, or just taken, if they fitted into a production.

The girls moved in, and if they could have returned to the boarding house they would have done so when the bathtubless state was discovered. The Board had a solution: the girls could register for gymnasium the next quarter and do their bathing at the University; until then they could visit members of the Board fortunate enough to have bathtubs or showers. The girls soon discovered that the telephone was far from a private one. Each conversation had to be ended quickly for some patron might be calling for a reservation. It sometimes seemed that half of the calls were from Board members wanting to know the number of reservations for each performance. No one kept a record of the calls per production until the third anniversary play, *The Phoenix and the Dwarfs*, when the girls announced that they had answered "Tryout Theatre" over two thousand times.

Even the girls' lives were not their own. Sometimes they

were called to the box-office when an assistant was needed or to the theatre to fill in for a sick usher. When a play needed extras the girls would be used in the last act. A year passed. The girls wrote *Ring Around the Bathtub*, a farce about their life in the theatre, and went off to New York. Tryout, by hook or by crook, had to find other people to take their places.

The theatre was always being repainted or renovated; the heating system was failing regularly. A borrowed circulating coal heater failed to heat it, despite a monstrous-looking duct someone designed to carry the heat to the right place. Everything else donated in substitution failed until finally a friend in the Seattle Gas Company found a furnace for the theatre. Seattle is seldom cold, but the theatre managed to be. In December and January small heaters surreptitiously found their way above the auditorium in the hope that they weren't against Fire Department rules or, if they were, no inspector would notice.

It was the remodeling and changes that finally brought the theatre near to disaster. The gentleman who owned the theatre property thought the building beyond good and evil. He was pleased that the members painted and polished his property, so pleased that he often forgot to collect the rent or made it a special donation. Whenever there was a financial surplus, the members would talk of a new building, money was put aside for it, and once even an option was taken on some property. But building was out of the question in war and post-war Seattle.

The technical crew, thinking of the playhouse as a set that could be changed, offered to rebuild the inside if the Board would close down productions for a month. Plans were approved and budgets set. Then everyone started to tear down the walls, and by the end of a week the stage crew was set to rebuild. But the City's Building Department was in no hurry to approve the plans. This was just as well, because an experienced carpenter noted that the supports of the building had been removed with the walls. While awaiting the Building Department's approval a union carpenter was employed to save the building before it collapsed. Nine months later the theatre was the most attractive plant anyone could ask for.

The expenses had mounted during the remodeling and an

electric bill, grossly over the original estimate, seemed to indicate bankruptcy. But no one would agree to that with the new theatre so temptingly ready for productions. A banker was aroused one night to listen to a scheme to borrow \$4,000 with the signatures of forty people who would assume limited liability of \$100 each. The banker observed that this was rather unusual, but he would see what he could do. More than forty members willing to take the chance were found in two days by three delegated Board members. The loan went through but not with forty signatures. The bank wanted twelve people who would be willing to accept limited liability up to \$400 and who had accounts in the bank and owned property in Seattle. In some miraculous way these twelve were found. A banker said, "This is the worst risk I've ever seen," and signed; a professor of Economics admitted that he knew better and yet signed. Tryout's lawyer pointed out that should Tryout default, any one or all of the signees could refuse to pay since, in a community property state, neither partner in a marriage may jeopardize the joint holdings without consent. The bank, he felt, was safe in making the loan only because not one of the signers would default even if he could.

The theatre opened to a year that seemed as full of promise as the first years of Tryout, but soon a shadow was to appear. Each month there was a new demand from the Fire Department or the Department of Sanitation; the final one being the Fire Department's insistence on a new foundation estimated at \$5,000. The Department added a month, then another, but finally the notice arrived to remodel or close.

Faced with this ultimatum the membership decided on a radical move. No theatre comparable in size to Tryout was available, but there was a comparatively new 288-seat house in the Adult Educational Center of the University in the downtown area. This could be rented for productions, though dates had to be set ahead, and on occasion would have to be adjusted to make room for some definite University production. There was no rehearsal space available, but campus classrooms could be used for the purpose. To produce in this theatre meant short runs and a concentration of audiences. No longer would there be the opportunity of letting an audience grow by word-of-mouth praise;

the audience would have to be secured before the play opened. Despite these handicaps, Tryout took the chance. It produced in this theatre for two successful years, during which the bank loan was paid in full at \$150 a month. The spring of 1950 ended with a burst of creative activity. Good plays, good productions, enthusiastic audiences made the season memorable.

Tryout continued to talk of a smaller theatre, but plans still went ahead as before. This time, so many good plays came in that six were definitely selected before September. But the summer months saw re-enlistments and the calling up of reserves while the draft took directors, technicians, and actors. When the fall opener went into rehearsal there was no director available for any of the other plays scheduled for the year. The play was cast three times, for each time a leading male actor or two disappeared into the Service. Everything was right for a perfect year except that the trained personnel had been swallowed up.

Once again Tryout's Board met. The theatre had been successful, as George Taylor, President, put it, because "nothing is untried but the play." Yet where were the actors and directors to come from? There seemed no answer to this question. Still no one was willing to let the theatre die.

Then Dorothy Allen, by now a veteran Board member, began to wonder if it would be possible for two elements in the community to unite in order to continue Tryout. The theatre could provide a group trained in the discovery and selection of plays and an audience that welcomed them, while the School of Drama at the University, already supplying Children's Theatre plays for Seattle Junior Programs, could supply the productions for Tryout. The idea bore fruit, and then a third element was added: Adult Education could supply the theatre — a newly developed 70-seat theatre in the Adult Education Center — and arrange all the business details. A plan was worked out by which Tryout would become a sponsoring group. While the new organization was making adjustments, the number of offerings could be reduced to three plays for the School of Drama.

A few members felt that this step was a backward one, but the membership as a whole agreed that it could not consent to "finis" for a theatre which had meant so much and could mean



even more to playwrights and, through them, to the American theatre. Even with the affiliation Tryout could hold firmly to the principle of aiding the playwright through production, and at the same time assure itself of competence. The affiliation has been successful. Tryout, by joining with the University's School of Drama, has secured for its principles and accomplishments a permanent place in the community it serves.

*Plays and Playwrights at Tryout Theatre, 1316 East 42nd Street, Seattle:*

*Blue Alert* — Zoe Lund Schiller and George Savage

*Day of a Faun* — Archie Binns

*Endure the Night* — Mel Gallemore and George Savage

*Cry for Wine* — Bill Noble

*The Old Warhorse* — Carter Kissell

*Verily I Do* — Gladys Charles and George Savage

*The Bishop's Bed* — Julia Bennett

*The Phoenix and the Dwarfs* — George Taylor and George Savage

*Quiet Victory* — Grant Redford

*Northwest Passages* — Variety show with material by June Burn, Jamie Jamieson, Farrar Burn, Ivar Haglund, James Stevens, Mel Gallemore, and others.

*Fire Shall Forgive* — Bill Noble and George Savage

*Ring Around the Bathtub* — Dorothy Berrigan and Dorothy Burke

*Red Tide* — Becky Merrick

*Holiday from Love* — Margaret Barry and Joan Sherman

*If I Can Have the Summer* — Glenna Christopherson

*Let's Get Married Mother* — Harriet Grieve

*Expensive Wench* — Zoe Lund Schiller and George Savage

*Accidentally Yours* — Pauline Williams

*Exclusive Story* — Ann Nicholson

*Hello Twelve Bucks* — Carroll Ellerbe

*When in Japan* — John Okada

*Half Way Home* — Joe Copson

*Plays and Playwrights at Tryout Theatre after the remodeling:*

*The Gull's Way* — Richard Barnett

*Madame Ada* — Aurand Harris

*Hail Columbia* — James H. Barke

*Unholy Apostle* — Everett Glass

*The End Is the Dream* — Mel Gallemore

*Cow in the Apartment* — Harold Holifield

*Alternate Route* — Harold Holifield

*Tina* — Robert Finch

*Cup of Fury* — Bill Noble and George Savage

*Consider the Lilies* — Robert Hupton

*Faith Hits Editor* — Keith Aldrich

*Warriors at Play* — Donald Smith

*Tom Jones* — adapted by Joseph H. Purdy and Paul Clarkson

*The Quick and the Dead* — Gerold Savery

*Plays and Playwrights at Center Theatre, Adult Education Center:*

*Sight Unseen* — Warner Law and Rosemary Foster

*Purple Starfish* — Bill Noble

*Beside Myself* — Mildred Summit

*Verily I Do* (with music) — Gladys Charles and George Savage

*Dream of Fair Women* — Reginald Lawrence

*Happy Family* — George Savage

*You Can't Put That Monkey on My Back* — Chris Blake

*Gilded Clock* — Ronald Mitchell

*Day After Tomorrow* — Ann Walter

*Plays and Playwrights at Sound Theatre, Adult Education Center:*

*Duct for One* — Eva Greene and Richard Blake

*Whistler's Grandmother* — Robert Finch

# ROMEO WAS A LADY: CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN'S LONDON TRIUMPH

by

ELISABETH M. PUKNAT

"She is undoubtedly the best breeches figure in America."<sup>1</sup> So ran William Burton's letter of recommendation for Charlotte Cushman when she decided to leave her native country for a trial on the English stage. Before Charlotte left for Liverpool on October 26, 1844, she was well supplied with letters — "in all about 70"<sup>2</sup> — directed to the attention of the English.

This quantity of written reassurance did little to lessen Charlotte's fears and depression after she set sail. While on shipboard she wrote of being "dreadfully low-spirited."<sup>3</sup> Her concern is understandable. For a long time she had been hoping for this trip, knowing that success abroad would put her "in the way of making much money"<sup>4</sup> on her return to the United States. She knew that her reception in England could influence the size as well as the opinions of her future audiences at home, for America always welcomed her own artists more warmly after they had received London polish and approval.

But now she was afraid that even the name of the ship on which she was crossing, the *Garrick*, might prove a bitter irony. While the boat was being tossed about in headwinds and the squalls of early winter, Charlotte found it difficult to heed her favorite Longfellow quotation which she carried as a kind of spiritual luggage. His rousing advice to "Go forth into the shadowy future, without fear,"<sup>5</sup> failed to relieve the seasick actress

<sup>1</sup> Undated manuscript letter from William Burton of the Arch Street Theater, Philadelphia to Benjamin Webster. In the Harvard Theatre Collection.

<sup>2</sup> From a manuscript letter, written by Charlotte Cushman, dated November 18, 1844, in the Library of Congress.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> From an undated letter in which Charlotte Cushman asked a certain Mr. Grigg for financial help for the trip. In the Harvard Theatre Collection.

<sup>5</sup> See Emma Stebbins, *Charlotte Cushman* (Boston 1878), p. 43. The quotation, slightly misquoted, is from *Hyperion*, Book IV, Chapter 8.

who lay miserably in the Ladies Cabin of the *Garrick*. She felt herself to be in a frightening suspension between two worlds.

The memory of her farewell performance as Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Park Theater in New York on the eve of her departure probably offered no more solid cheer than did Longfellow. Vandenhoff played Benedict that night, and, if his recollection is reliable, she performed "carelessly or over-anxiously" to a house "by no means full." She had mixed up acts "in a very perplexed and perplexing manner."<sup>6</sup>

Intensifying Charlotte's professional worries were thoughts of her dependents in Philadelphia. She hoped to be able to help her pretty sister Susan's acting career as well as her own by winning the English audience. Susan had made what was called, in genteel understatement, an unfortunate marriage. While Charlotte wrote her mother and sent greetings to her small nephew, she could muster only a shaky faith in the reception which would determine the future of all of them. She called the period ahead "my exile."<sup>7</sup> Although her English fate was to become an important part of American theatrical history, even a pedant might forgive her for being unconscious of the cultural significance of her trip while she was in the midst of such personal anxieties.

It was seven o'clock in the November dark when Charlotte stepped from the dock into the streets of Liverpool. She strained to catch her first glimpse of an English metropolis: "The warehouses all dark brown stone looked to me like prisons. A dense fog rendered the streets perfectly inaccessible but for the gas lights."<sup>8</sup> Shortly after reaching her hotel, she decided to postpone a decision concerning her trial on the London stage. She would indulge herself, play the tourist, and explore with the Blisses, a wealthy American couple whom she had met on the boat. She rationalized that she might never act in Scotland and that she must seize the opportunity of seeing Edinburgh now. And besides, as she wrote to Philadelphia, "Having a gentleman along was so much better."<sup>9</sup>

While sightseeing with enthusiasm, the twenty-eight-year-old actress temporarily escaped her problems as an artist and became

<sup>6</sup> George Vandenhoff, *Leaves from an Actor's Note-Book* (New York 1860), pp. 196, 197.

<sup>7</sup> From manuscript letter, dated November 18, 1844.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Manuscript letter, dated December 2, 1844, in the Library of Congress.

just another nineteenth-century American abroad. She enjoyed riding in an English mail coach travelling "ten miles an hour — horses galloping all the way." Even at that daring speed she watched a passing fox hunt of "60 men or more — all in red coats and such a number of dogs — it was a beautiful sight!" She told of going "to the theatre where Mrs. Siddons Kemble & Kean first started from."<sup>10</sup>

In Scotland Charlotte became ill from wet feet, acquired "among some old tombs"<sup>11</sup> in a cathedral crypt, and she began to worry again. She had joked that she might return to America after her travels and be "exhibited like the learned pig,"<sup>12</sup> but suddenly she realized that although she had seen something of England and Scotland she had come no nearer her goal of returning home as a triumphant actress.

On her return to Liverpool, she was immediately confronted with a professional decision. A letter from Macready, with whom she had acted in New York and Boston, asked her to come to Paris to perform with him. After a tormented weighing of the possibilities, she declined. He sent one of his emissaries from London to try to convince her that she was "taking an irreconcilable step."<sup>13</sup> Soon Edward Stirling wrote from Covent Garden asking her terms. Just as she had worried over what she thought were Macready's theatrical motives, she questioned Stirling's offer, particularly since it was for a brief period only. She was relieved to have a note from Benjamin Webster, suggesting an after-Christmas opportunity at the Haymarket. She made a trip to Paris to see what Macready and Helena Faucit were doing. Her final decision, however, was to accept none of these offers.

Charlotte's very caution in choosing the means of her debut came from her desperate hope that her first appearance would be effective enough to cause several reigning ladies of the English stage to rearrange, if not to lose, their laurels. She had been to see the acting of Ellen Tree, one of the favorites in the competition she would face. The ambitious young American only betrayed her own misgivings when she wrote home that Ellen Tree had

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

suffered "a falling off," that "save for a few old stage tricks,"<sup>14</sup> Susan could perform with more spirit. This was surely feminine bravado, for Charlotte at other times would admonish her sister to put dash into everything she did.

The stories as to how Charlotte settled upon her first London engagement vary<sup>15</sup> from a decorous account of Mr. F. M. Maddox coming to ask her to act at his theatre, the Princess's, to the more exciting version of Charlotte down on her knees with clenched fists, vowing to defeat her English enemies and fairly shocking Maddox into hiring her. This picture of Charlotte, like the anecdote about her sticking pins into a young, placid colleague "to arouse her to a proper degree of animation and vocal terror"<sup>16</sup> may be false, but both items are telling as to her personality.

On February 14, 1845, she made her debut at the Princess's as Bianca in Henry Hart Milman's *Fazio*. Despite the watery morbidities that Bianca has to speak, the part had come alive in performances by such actresses as Fanny Kemble. Charlotte's appearance in the part caused little advance excitement or special preparation. The management stretched shillings by using the same dingy scenery and long-familiar costumes which had decked out innumerable past plays. The audience was relatively small, but it fortunately did contain a scattering of critics.

When the verdicts came out, critic after critic lauded the actress for her stage passion. Her raving plea that night for *Fazio*'s life was long remembered, "her varied intonation in repeating the name, Giraldi Fazio. . . . Hard, stern, and remorseless at first, the accents came forth tremblingly on repetition, and the dramatic contrast gained her the first distinct round of applause."<sup>17</sup> The more discerning commentaries noted the control of a powerful intellect conveying variations within the emotions expressed. The large, awkward, New England girl, who had once put on *Bluebeard* in her mother's Boston attic, was now acclaimed as "tall" and "commanding."<sup>18</sup> Years of hard work in a

<sup>14</sup> Letter of December 2, 1844.

<sup>15</sup> Stebbins, *op. cit.*, p. 46; Clara Erskine Clement, *Charlotte Cushman* (Boston 1882), pp. 35-36; and William T. Price, *A Life of Charlotte Cushman* (New York 1894), pp. 57-59.

<sup>16</sup> "Men and Things," in the *Evening Bulletin* of May 24, 1898. Clipping in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

<sup>17</sup> Godfrey Turner, quoted in *The Era* of August 5, 1905. Clipping on "Charlotte Cushman's London Debut" in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

<sup>18</sup> *London Herald*, quoted in Clement, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

wide range of characters in the theatres of New York and Philadelphia, lay behind her spectacular capture of her first English audience. Quickly she was recognized as the actress whom William Winter was to remember as filling the stage "with the weirdness and the brilliant vitality of her presence."<sup>19</sup> Many years after her debut the claim was made that she "quits all English rivalry" in her Bianca and "challenges even Rachel."<sup>20</sup>

By March of 1845 Charlotte Cushman could write coolly that no American had ever succeeded in London as she had. In her first London season she was not above gloating when she heard that her fellow-American actor, Edwin Forrest, had been hissed by the Manchester audience; that the papers were as busy cutting his performances to pieces as they were praising hers. Letters of congratulation poured in, and they were quickly followed by the worshippers in person. Every night when she was not acting, she was bid to dinner and dancing parties.

Charlotte hoped that reports of her success were being spread through the States. Her compatriots abroad were already talking loudly of her. She wrote home, "My country people here are very proud."<sup>21</sup> They, who had smouldered while the English murmured in patronizing fashion of the low state of the arts across the ocean, could now identify themselves with Charlotte's triumph. Americans, with their weakness for imported talents, had never accorded her such intense approval as did Londoners, and hence Americans in London.

She enjoyed being "the great pan of the dairy"<sup>22</sup> and rapidly calculated her increased monetary value at home, deciding that no less than forty thousand dollars for the first year would induce her to return. "Beautiful complimentary notes" came from The Reverend Mr. Coleman, a visitor in London, who had once been a Unitarian minister in Salem. She could recall how members of his profession had managed to fill entire columns in the Boston newspapers on the evil influence of the theatre and the shocking lives of actresses.<sup>23</sup> Iniquity, it seemed, might diminish in direct proportion to success.

<sup>19</sup> William Winter, *Shadows of the Stage* (New York 1893), p. 131.

<sup>20</sup> *Tallis's Dramatic Magazine and General Theatrical and Musical Review*, February 1851, p. 103.

<sup>21</sup> From manuscript letter, dated March 27, 1845, in the Library of Congress.

<sup>22</sup> From manuscript letter, dated April 1, 1845, in the Library of Congress.

<sup>23</sup> See the raging controversy over the existence of a theatre in Boston fought in the columns of the *Boston Courier* of October 8 and 13, and November 19, 1830.

Within five weeks Charlotte delivered over twenty impressive performances. Happy in her victory, she called this "doing pretty well considering that they don't like American talent."<sup>24</sup> A typical English judgment on the variety in her roles that followed Bianca was that she

did not lose one iota of popularity by her transition from tragedy to comedy in the part of Rosalind. That earnestness which entered into all the varied emotions and passions of Bianca, with the rage of Emilia, and the stern purpose of Lady Macbeth, was exchanged for an equal devotion to the cause of the amiable and playful Rosalind. Whatever character Miss Cushman undertakes, she enters into it thoroughly, speaking from it directly, and hence the appearance of nature in all she does. The maintained hilarity and care of her Rosalind were perfectly delightful.<sup>25</sup>

Another part that the English delighted in was her Mrs. Haller, for, like the Americans, the Londoners flocked to see Kotzebue's too long-lived *Stranger*. Charlotte's powerful shrieking and her heart-rending stage sufferings only swelled her reputation. Even logical members of the audience, who protested the odd morality of the piece, could be seen wiping their eyes.

Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd sent Charlotte word that he would write a play for her; Milman sent his compliments on her performance in his *Fazio*; and a Captain Mayer presented her with a more tangible honor — "the loveliest Italian greyhound you ever saw."<sup>26</sup> By the end of March Charlotte was sitting to five painters. If she had never been beautiful, her face was, at least, being somewhat assiduously reproduced for posterity. When Godfrey Turner saw Charlotte as Bianca he remarked that she was "more singular than prepossessing," and that she had "a face which exaggerated Macready's"<sup>27</sup> with an unfortunate chin. But too much can be made of her ugliness. Nathaniel Hawthorne's son came nearer the truth that matters when he said:

My first serious love-madness was for her. I never got over that passion, and was amazed and indignant to read in a biographical paragraph on her, long afterward, that she was a homely woman! . . . there was a power and splendor in her countenance that took captive your soul.<sup>28</sup>

After her initial success, Charlotte was certain that she would make the fortune the Cushmans needed. For a while, however,

<sup>24</sup> Letter of March 27, 1845.

<sup>25</sup> *Illustrated London News*, March 8, 1845.

<sup>26</sup> Letter of March 27, 1845.

<sup>27</sup> Godfrey Turner quoted in *The Era* of August 5, 1905.

<sup>28</sup> *Memoirs of Julian Hawthorne*, edited by Edith Hawthorne (New York 1938), pp. 262-263.



she felt compelled to continue her economies. With newspapers costing twelve and a half cents apiece she refused to buy them even for the most glowing accounts of her genius. She simply seized upon whatever paper she saw lying loose and unpossessed. Thus did the stream of triumphant notices reach her mother in Philadelphia.<sup>29</sup> In a short time, her continuing success gave her the confidence to have her family join her in a cottage in Bayswater. It was there that she began to work out her plan for extending her own fame in England and for securing Susan's future. The sisters would play together in *Romeo and Juliet* and, as a pair, risk comparison not only with the great actresses who had preceded them, but with all the well-remembered Shakespearean lovers who had been on the English stage.

Charlotte knew that her assumption of the role of Romeo would shock some critics and that she might lose power thereby. But she also knew the advantage inherent in the talk her decision would stimulate. She had learned in her Boston days that the ranting of moralists can fill as well as empty theatres. To soothe her admirers she could say that it was done for Susan's sake; this sacrificing generosity was to appeal to the more sentimental journalists.<sup>30</sup>

In the midst of the rented furniture in the cottage Charlotte charged fiercely at an imaginary Tybalt. She studied to avoid points that might incur damaging ridicule. The illusion, Charlotte calculated, was to be safeguarded by careful planning of the stage business. Her task was made more difficult by some lack of enthusiasm in her sister and the constant grumblings of her supporting cast. There were remarks about the "American Indians" who were taking over the theatre and no doubt loud reminiscences of the great Romeos and Juliets whom it had been a real privilege to support in the past.<sup>31</sup> But by Christmas of 1845, in spite of such annoyances, the Cushmans were almost ready.

On December 30, admirers of the American Bianca left their holiday firesides to come to the Haymarket early. The theatre

<sup>29</sup> See manuscript letter of March 2, 1845 in the Library of Congress.

<sup>30</sup> See C. W. Elliott, "One Woman's Work," *The Galaxy*, February 1869, p. 229.

<sup>31</sup> Stebbins, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59. For a vivid account of the behavior behind scenes with which an American actress could be confronted in London, see Anna C. Mowatt, *Autobiography of an Actress* (Boston 1854), pp. 272-273.

was filled. This unusual Romeo and his pretty, freshly imported Juliet had aroused a tremendous curiosity. On that long-to-be-remembered night the audience saw both the triumph of an actress and an impressive conception of Shakespeare's play. The critic for *The Athenaeum*, who disapproved, on principle, of women's taking masculine roles, recorded a hard-won eulogy of the interpretation of the tragedy which Charlotte gave to the Londoners. His initially dim view of a woman in the lover's part perhaps makes his account even more reliable as a reconstruction of what happened on the Haymarket stage that night.

It is Love at First Sight — but not First Love. . . . this is very different from the mere sentimentalism which, under the title of Shakespeare's play, has so long usurped the boards. What there was of the woman just served to indicate juvenility, and no more. . . . The *concetti* of the early scenes were rendered with intelligent distinctness; his conduct at the masqued ball had all desirable prominence. Never was courtship more fervent, more apparently sincere, more reverential, and yet more impetuously passionate, than that which on the silent air of night ascended to Juliet's window. . . . Little inferior was the scene in Friar Laurence's cell — the word banishment again was full charged with electricity — and the despair of the passionate youth became appalling, while, rejecting the "philosophy" that could not "make a Juliet," he threw himself "upon the ground. . . ." The soliloquy preceding that interview with the apothecary was capitally spoken; and the scene at the tomb of the Capulets replete with power, vigour, and effect.<sup>22</sup>

Here, as Romeo, Charlotte could allow a full outlet to the strange tones of her voice. Her stride was convincingly masculine. Her courting was fiery; her despair, penetrating and believable. The tall body and strong face, freed from hampering skirts and waving bonnets, now showed to advantage; the large frame was at ease. Charlotte moved commandingly as though she were born to the doublet. Gestures, which had seemed angular when she acted a gentle or genteel heroine, now seemed right and direct.

Playing the Veronese, Charlotte combined impassioned action with discrimination, though there was to be a minority complaint that her very energy betrayed her into moments of melodramatic violence. This Romeo's emphasis on the contrast between the loves for Rosaline and Juliet, his "gallant bearing toward the every-day companions of his youth, his urbanity and kind condescension toward Balthazar and the Nurse, and his courteous deference to the Friar,"<sup>23</sup> were to be well retained in critical memory.

<sup>22</sup> *The Athenaeum*, January 3, 1846, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> *The Theatrical Journal*, VII (1846), 380.

Charlotte's "appearance, gait, and words" in transmitting "devouring passion," her "forced and melancholy smile"<sup>34</sup> in the dialogue with Benvolio about love in Act I were all part of the lasting effect. Years before in New Orleans she had given up an operatic career. But her voice was still a powerful instrument. The tone of that voice when Romeo gave Balthazar the letter was to haunt at least one critic and thrill "through his very soul," by ringing in his "ears for weeks after."<sup>35</sup> Social gatherings as well as newspaper columns were to be filled with talk of the balcony scene and that in the Friar's cell, of Romeo's threat of suicide, of the lovers' parting and their deaths.

The famous opening night was, however, not without human lapses. Before the end of the first act one of Charlotte's nightmares had been realized. The more important members of her supporting cast were, on the whole, chary of hurting their own reputations and incomes, even though the Mercutio did seem to confuse his role with that of a captain in a farce. It was the extras of the ball scene who ran the performance out of control for a few dangerous minutes. They stumbled around the stage in an unintentional burlesque of the elegant possibilities of the dance. There were hisses and laughter.<sup>36</sup> Charlotte's ensuing stage passion may well have been heightened by genuine fury. Her anger perhaps strengthened the single lunge with which she later struck down Tybalt.<sup>37</sup>

By the end of the tragedy the hisses had been forgotten. The audience was cheering loudly for Charlotte had found her most sensational role. She had been a "breeches figure" before, but never a young man with such universal stage appeal. The doubters, who had spoken openly, and the others who had muttered behind her back that she was going to toss away her reputation by attempting the impossible, were probably silent when they left the Haymarket that evening. The stage illusion had been great enough for at least one young English woman to announce: "Miss Cushman is a very dangerous young man."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> See "Haymarket Theatre" clipping, dated January 3, 1846, in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

<sup>37</sup> See Arthur Colby Sprague, *Shakespeare and the Actors* (Cambridge, Mass. 1944), pp. 306, 307, 424.

<sup>38</sup> From an undated clipping in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

With the new year came tribute after tribute to "this astonishing actress" who "electrified the whole audience" with "her ardent love, her excessive grief, and classic attitudes . . . delineated in the most beautiful and powerful manner it is possible to conceive."<sup>39</sup>

Charlotte's genius in her production of *Romeo and Juliet* extended beyond her own performance. Susan was triumphantly maneuvered into the shelter of her sister's success. Gloomy prophecies that Susan would never equal Fanny Kemble's or any one else's Juliet were effectively stifled. Those watchers who had denied any greatness to her acting were defeated by Charlotte's design. It was difficult to separate this Juliet from her impassioned Romeo. The two lovers were of one family; the weaker actress reflected the glory of the stronger instead of being totally eclipsed. It was as if this Juliet, like a puppet, was animated by a force outside herself. The force was undeniably successful and almost inseparable from its manifestation. From all sides the puppet was called "charming," and her figure "very elegant."<sup>40</sup>

Many profitable nights stretched ahead for this Romeo who was the rage of the season. The future had never seemed so secure. The cottage became too small for an actress who could make no less a nineteenth-century personage than James Sheridan Knowles hold his breath while his blood "ran hot and cold."<sup>41</sup> *The Theatrical Journal* claimed that his wildly enthusiastic verbal applause was "transmitted to America" and "printed in three quarters of the globe."<sup>42</sup>

Charlotte's success healed some of the artistic wounds suffered by her predecessors. At thirty she had arrived at a point no American woman had reached before her. The English could no longer safely indulge in feelings of cultural superiority in the art of acting. They could and would, of course, continue to congratulate themselves on their superior judgment. In 1851 a Londoner could still write:

Thus Prescott, Irving, Cooper have brought their books to a London press; and the chief of her [America's] native actors were not content with native homage, till its value had been certified by English affirmation.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *The Theatrical Journal*, VII (1846), 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Stebbins, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>42</sup> *The Theatrical Journal* VII (1846), 369.

<sup>43</sup> *Tallis's Dramatic Magazine*, February 1851, p. 100.

While the applause gave answer to Charlotte's value, the British struck various attitudes. There were blanket proclamations that no English actress "was able to compete with her."<sup>44</sup> Yet at least one quibbler was to grumble that Americanisms in Charlotte's speech were "so unpleasant to English ears."<sup>45</sup> And a journalist, noting the fact that a heavy taste for American talent had been stimulated, named a compromise variety — Anglo-American talent.<sup>46</sup> Charlotte Cushman's ancestor, Robert Cushman, had, after all, been an Englishman, though a rebellious one, and, in an unfortunate historical episode, he had joined the Pilgrims. It was then only natural that his descendant should have spent her earlier years on the other side of the Atlantic.

To others Charlotte's reception merely proved the tolerance and generosity of Londoners, and the unfairness of those less successful Americans who had blamed their failure on their treatment. In welcoming one American genius the English were only proving that their past, harsh judgments of other Americans had been valid.<sup>47</sup> The Yankee slowness in discovering its own artistic resources was pointed out by an Englishman who recalled that the Americans had "doomed" Charlotte "for three years as a utility performer in a minor theater."<sup>48</sup>

In the midst of these currents of national pride, shock, and genuine enthusiasm, Charlotte could be serene and confident, for had she not been named as the second Siddons and hadn't this been carefully echoed in the provinces?<sup>49</sup>

That London had paid Charlotte their favorite and highest compliment was resented across the Atlantic by a young, cultural patriot who was writing for the *Brooklyn Eagle*. Walt Whitman wanted no British labels for Charlotte Cushman. He felt that she was great and, like the country she came from, needed to fit into no worn categories. Whitman protested: "she is *herself*."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *The Theatrical Times*, September 5, 1846, pp. 97-98.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, November 13, 1847, p. 355.

<sup>46</sup> *The Theatrical Journal*, VII (1846), 351.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>48</sup> *The Theatrical Times*, September 5, 1846, p. 98.

<sup>49</sup> See playbills from Swansea and Hull, in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

<sup>50</sup> See Walt Whitman quoted in Montrose J. Moses, *The Fabulous Forrest* (Boston 1929), p. 211; also his essay on "The Miserable State of the Stage," in Moses and John Mason Brown, *The American Theatre as Seen by Its Critics* (New York 1934), pp. 70 ff.

## “SETTING BY DONALD OENSLAGER”

Mr. Oenslager needs no introduction to our readers. To those who have visited Broadway during the past twenty-six years, “Setting by Donald Oenslager” on a playbill has many times roused anticipation before the first curtain on a New York theatrical production. To date, for the New York theatre, he has designed the settings for over one hundred and fifty operas, ballets, musical comedies, and plays. To those who have had the good fortune to attend Mr. Oenslager’s classes in scene design at the Drama School of Yale, he is known for his enthusiasm in imparting his theatrical experience and knowledge to the younger generation. And to others who have seen the recent exhibition of Mr. Oenslager’s work, which has traveled during 1950-1951 both in North and South America, the impact of his varied approaches to scene design on gallery audiences was memorable.

On a visit to his recent exhibition, the thought came that our readers would be interested in having one of Mr. Oenslager’s designs between the covers of the *Theatre Annual*, so that it could be seen, if not on the stage, at least as a record in the library. The idea was suggested to Mr. Oenslager and he readily expressed his approval.

Mr. Oenslager selected the setting for *Washington Square*\* because his material for this play was complete and is typical of how he approaches his work on a production.

Much of the effectiveness of every production in the theatre depends on the complete understanding and co-operation of all those responsible for projecting the play. After discussion with the author, producer, and director, the designer evolves the ground plan and elevations of the scenes. Mr. Oenslager uses, for purposes of clarity and expediency, graph paper for these preliminary drawings. After this, a model and/or a sketch is completed. The scale drawings are then made by his assistant from his first drawings. From the blueprint of the working drawings, estimates are obtained for construction and painting. Mr. Oen-

\* A drama by Ruth Goodman and Augustus Goetz, suggested by the novel of Henry James, originally produced in 1947 by Oscar Serlin and later produced by Jed Harris and Fred Finklehoffe as *The Heiress*.

slager makes all of his own color sketches for the painter. He selects all furniture and important properties and makes specifications for and selects upholstery, draperies, floor covering, and artificial flowers. He lays out the light plot for the entire production. During the rehearsal period he inspects the work of the various craftsmen engaged on the production. If it is a period play, Mr. Oenslager designs and supervises the execution of the costumes. Finally, he is responsible for assembling, dressing the set, and lighting the production before the actors come onto the scene for dress rehearsals. The opening night of the play is the farewell performance of the designer.

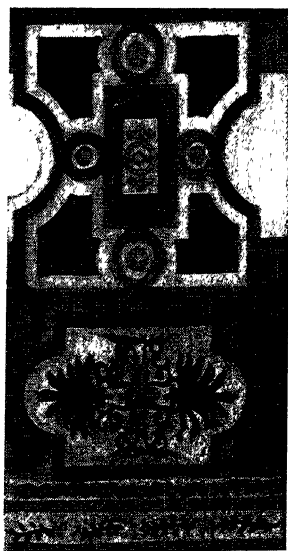


Plate 1

Detail of Carpet Pattern.

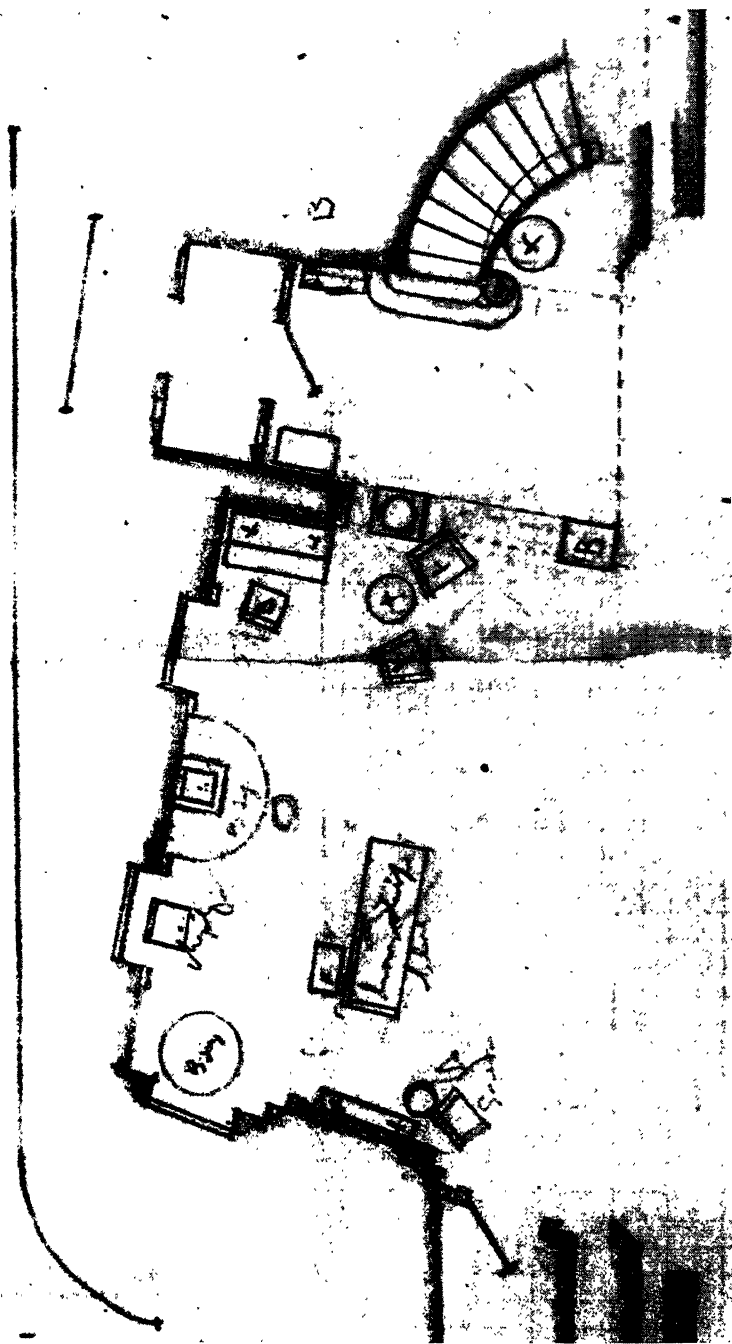


Plate 2

Designer's Ground Plan (Graph Paper).



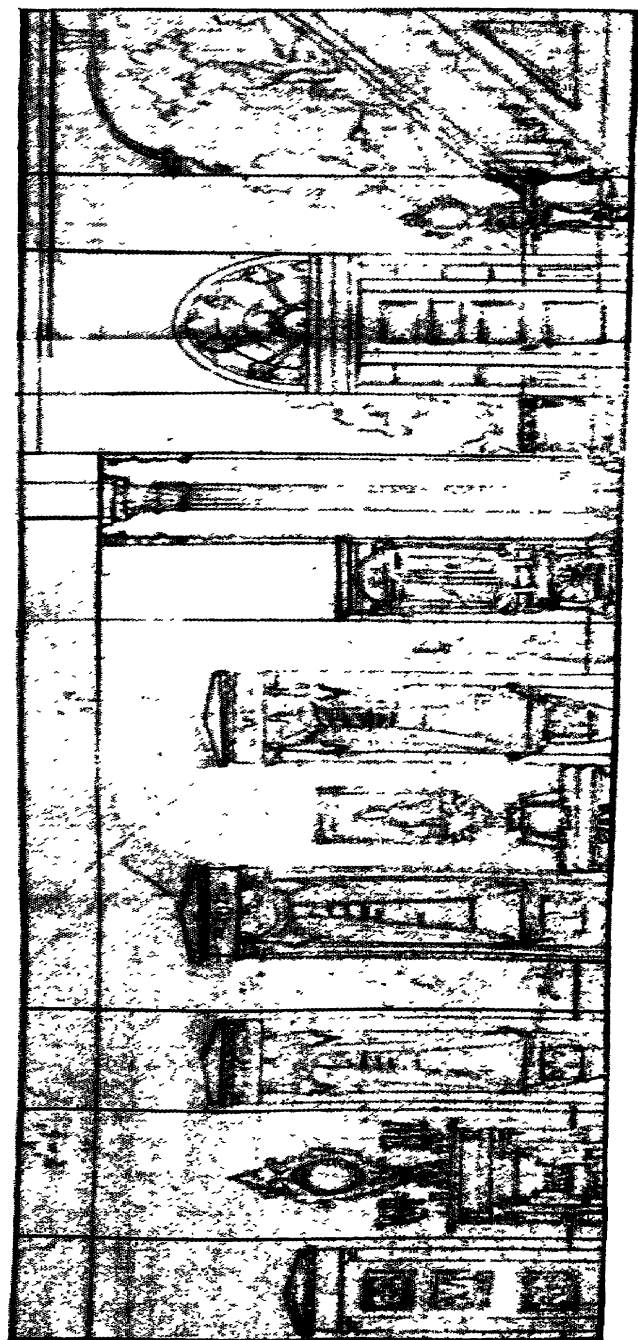


Plate 3

Designer's Elevation (Graph Paper).

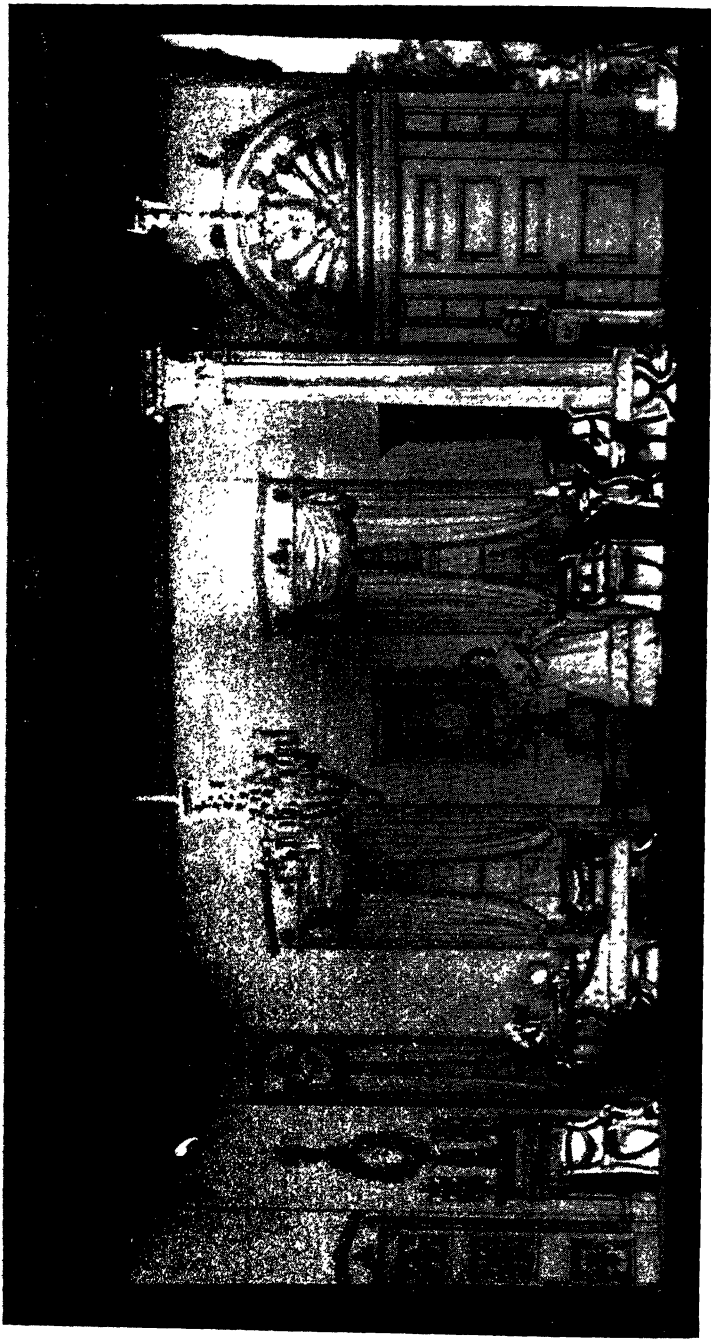


Plate 4  
Presentation Cardboard Model (Black and White— $\frac{1}{4}$ " Scale).



Plate 5

Final Color Sketch.

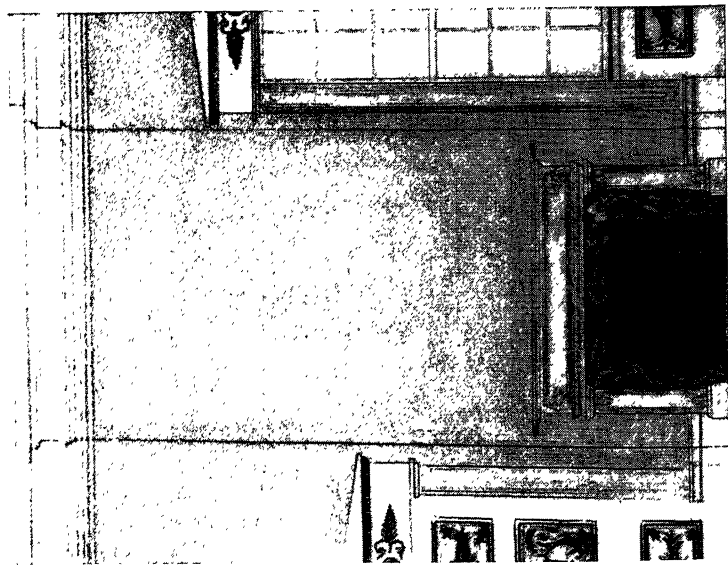


Plate 6  
Wall Detail.



Plate 7  
Stair—Hall Detail.

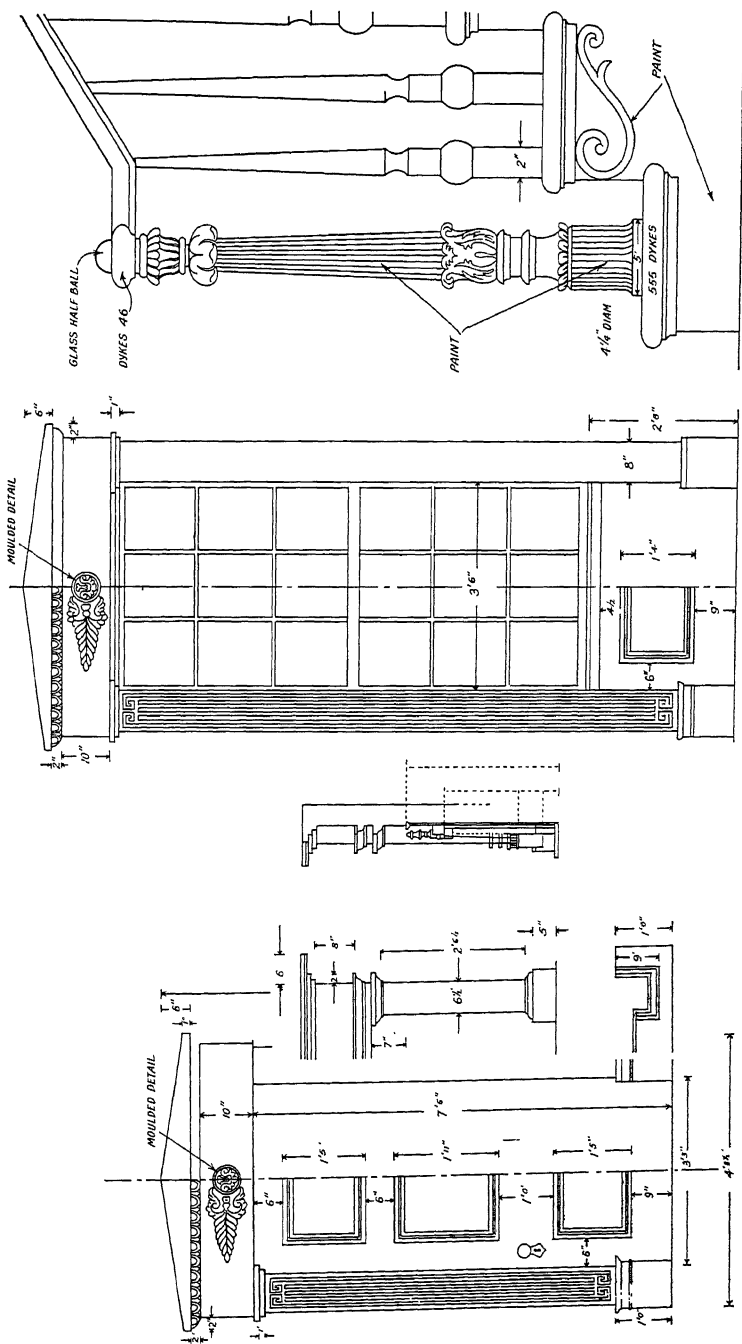


Plate 8  
Drawings of Architectural Details (A).



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PRESS



*Uncle Tom and Eva*



*Eliza Crossing the Ice*

## THE CENTENNIAL

of

### *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

1852 - 1952

The two unusual porcelain vases, here reproduced to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the first production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, are treasured in the Theatre Collection of the Museum of the City of New York not only as outstanding examples of the ornamentation of a Victorian drawing room but also as charming records of this famous play.

The vases are approximately eighteen inches high and are of substantial form. The ornate fern fronds are gold as is the decorative tracery; the landscapes are delicately and naturally tinted in contrast with the foregrounds in which the predominating figures are vivid in color. Although the porcelain bears no factory mark, the vases are undoubtedly of English make *circa* 1860.—May Davenport Seymour



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# THE BEGINNINGS OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE

by

JOHN LOVELL, JR.

A great theatre historian, Allardyce Nicoll, has for years stressed the *whole* theatre—that highly organized and co-ordinated set of functions<sup>1</sup>—while his lesser brothers have too often been enthusiastic for some individual element of the theatre, treating it as the heart of the wheel rather than as a cog. Some very important functions, moreover, such as the people and the government, the audience, the architects, the businessmen, and the graphic artists have received next to no attention from these dogmatic recorders. Even more important, the fundamentals of the theatre, like elemental drives, have been generally subordinated to facile and tidy trends and names. It is past time that some balance be restored in these regards, and what better place to start than to ask the questions: How, when, where, and by whom did the American theatre—the whole theatre—actually begin?

Sir Henry Irving would have known where to look for these beginnings. Let us use his yardstick. After showing that the work of the theatre is transcendental (mere realism being insufficient to stimulate the imagination and rouse the sensibilities of the audience),<sup>2</sup> he described the theatre as a comprehensive art effort, bringing into one entity: “thought, speech, passion, humor, pathos, emotion, distance, substance, form, size, color, time, force, light, illusion to each or all of the senses, sound, tone, rhythm, music, motion.”<sup>3</sup> Following this broader—and truer—definition of the theatre, the logical place to look for its origins is not on the spot of the first theatrical performance on the soil known as America but in the backgrounds of the people themselves. When and how did the people first become aware of the remarkable one-

<sup>1</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *The Development of the Theatre* (London 1927).

<sup>2</sup> Sir Henry Irving, *The Theatre in Relation to the State* (Boston 1898), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

ness described by Henry Irving? Where first was it dramatized in Man's eternal struggle and conflict? Who first evolved character and situation through the arts of the drama, and put to use the multifarious facilities of Nature and of Man's inventiveness to make all this real and touching?

A search for the answers to these queries leads us directly into the arms of the one people given the most credit for halting and destroying the theatre: the New England Puritans. To the double gasp of surprise that the Puritans should be mentioned at all and the culture-loving Southerners ignored, there is this to say. The early American Southerner was only an imitator—the English Cavalier transplanted to the New World colonies. He lacked the comprehensive and original sense of perpetual conflict in this world and the next; he lacked a philosophy of reactions and consequences such as the Greeks and Elizabethans had on the street, in the house, and in the marketplace. He did not organize his whole being on the struggle and dare to live in the suspense of the outcome. He did not come to *any* theatrical awareness so early as did the Puritan.

But let us be more systematic. A careful reading of William Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation* will serve as an excellent first demonstration.<sup>4</sup> Nowhere in American literature is a more telling story of Man's struggle with circumstance, the evolution and propagation of purpose through principle and device—which is the root and branch of exciting characterization—and the dramatization of action through necessity. Furthermore, the whole had theatrical intent and effect, even theatrical compression, lacking only conventional form and delivery.

And Bradford is only a sample. Read the Mathers, especially Increase and Cotton, whose mastery of dramatic construction at least equaled that of any American dramatist for nearly three hundred years. Read Urian Oakes' "The Sovereign Efficacy of Divine Providence" exclusively from the standpoint of dramatic quality.<sup>5</sup> In spite of his suppression of the theatre in England and America for its grossness and skepticism, and his using the lively theatre of Amsterdam as one of the reasons he could not stay in

<sup>4</sup> See *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, III<sup>4</sup> (Boston 1856), 11-88.

<sup>5</sup> For good excerpts from the Mathers, Oakes, and others, see Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, *The Puritans* (New York 1938); for Oakes specifically, pp. 350-367.

than any other single force.

Nor did he fail to give attention, and sometimes outright approval, to specific theatrical skills, occasionally for theatrical reasons. Coming home from a ministers' discussion on dancing, Increase Mather (1639-1723) sat down and wrote his famous "An Arrow against Profane and Promiscuous Dancing (Drawn out of a Quiver of the Scriptures)." Far from condemning all dancing *per se*, the great Puritan dictator permits "Pyrrhical or Polemical Saltation" (when men vault in their Armour to shew strength and activity). He warmly advocated Dancing or Leaping as a natural expression of joy, which curiously enough is exactly what it is in the theatre most of the time. Such dancing, says the Reverend Mather, has no more sin in it than laughter, or any other outward expression of rejoicing.

Gynecandrical Dancing (dancing between men and women) and wicked Dancing Masters are the targets of his reproof as being conducive to the violation of the Seventh Commandment; but he reiterates that Dancing or Musick or Singing is not in itself sinful. And he clearly implies that a good deal of it was going on in the Massachusetts of his day. Thus while opposing the theatre as an institution in the form that it took, this great spokesman of American Puritanism encouraged the growth of talents which were, generations later, to provide the American stage with many necessary artists, performers, and *dramatis personae*.

In no sense was the Reverend Increase Mather a voice crying in the wilderness. His almost equally great contemporary, the Reverend John Cotton, goes a step further and says: "Dancing (yea though mixt) I would not simply condemn . . . only lascivious dancing to wanton ditties."<sup>8</sup> And Samuel Sewall informs us that Edward Euston, organist of the Episcopal King's Chapel, augmented his salary by teaching dancing.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Full story of this is told in Bradford, *op. cit.*, and in Douglas Campbell, *The Puritan in Holland* (New York 1892), esp. II, 132-136, 346. Read also for background John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, esp. Book Second; study the dramatic purpose and method of this source book of Puritan philosophy, behavior, and dramaturgy.

<sup>7</sup> Miller and Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 411-412.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 411 (Taken from *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, X<sup>2</sup> [1823], 183).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* (Taken from *Diary of Samuel Sewall*, III, iii, note); see also Percy A. Scholes, *Puritans and Music in England and New England* (London 1934), pp. 33-37.

What is more, Cotton Mather, Increase's brilliant son and Massachusetts's acknowledged genius and inspiration, urges in *The Accomplished Singer*<sup>10</sup> that everyone learn to sing better; and in the light of the present discussion, note his reasons: to utter our sentiments more expressively; to glorify God in worship; to signify our delight in divine truths. What better objectives could a fully theatrical music director (working on a show) set than more expressive utterance, glorification of the subject, signifying delight?

The best modern authorities insist that the New England Puritans had and relished musical instruments, especially drums, trumpets, and horns. To these religious-minded fathers, the use of such instruments, often mentioned in the Bible, had practical as well as exhilarating effects. The decline of instrumental music at the end of the Seventeenth Century was due to lack of teachers to meet the demand and was apparently very much deplored.<sup>11</sup>

In the matter of costume—another essential skill of the stage—the Puritan was not a nullifier, as so many careless readers of history believe, but a revolutionary. He had attacked Elizabethan richness and gaudiness in dress because he firmly believed that the object of dress was to clothe the body, "and that to do more than furnish necessary and proper covering was to offend God."<sup>12</sup> Any person mildly acquainted with the art of costume in the theatre will immediately accept this position as a theory of costume design, not a negation of it.

But there were even other theories among these Puritans. The Great and General Court of Massachusetts Colony legislated against extravagances in dress and toilet. They declared, as early as September 3, 1634, that:

. . . noe person, either man or woman, shall hereafter make or buy any apparell. either wollen, silke, or lynnene, with any lace on it, silver, golde, silke, or thread, under the penalty of forfeiture of such cloathes, &c. Also that noe person, either man or woman, shall make or buy any slashed cloathes, other than one slash in each sleeve, and another in the backe; also, all cuttworks, imbroidered or needle worke capps, bandes, or rayles,

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 450-451 (Taken from *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, VIII, 693); see also Scholes, *op. cit.*, pp. 270-274.

<sup>11</sup> Scholes, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-32; Henry Wilder Foote, "Musical Life in Boston in the Eighteenth Century," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, XLIX, New Ser. Pt. II (1939), 297-300.

<sup>12</sup> Fred E. Keay, "The Puritan and Dress Reform," *New England Magazine*, XXIII, New Ser. (January 1901), 568.



are forbidden hereafter to be made & worne, under the aforesaid penalty; also all golde or silver girdles, hattbands, belts, ruffs, beaver hatts, are prohibited to be bought & worne hereafter under the aforesaid penalty.<sup>13</sup>

The significance of this legislation is twofold: first, that the legislators were so very specific clearly indicated a strong and colorful tendency toward fine costume and make-up among the people at large; and second, that the Court in 1651 admitted that this and succeeding legislation were rank failures in "abating the evil." In 1675, the Court felt compelled to legislate against frilly hairdos. But back in 1638, one Thomas Hallowell had been committed to prison for being unable to explain satisfactorily his possession of a pair of red silk stockings, and the record seems to show that thousands of others blithely ignored the Court's dicta, and took their chances.<sup>14</sup>

At this point, it is worth noting that actual drama, though not acted, was definitely known to these Puritans. Esther Cloudman Dunn points to many likely cases of such knowledge, and to two or three specific ones: Increase Mather's list of books in 1664 contained Latin and Greek stage plays; and Seaborn Cotton, son of John, copied into his commonplace book, about 1657, those immortal (and to him guilty?) lines from *Measure for Measure*: "Take, O, take those lips away."<sup>15</sup>

No doubt, the greatest example of co-ordinated theatricals (in the conventional sense) in early New England was Thomas Morton's revels at Merry-Mount. As a non-Puritan and a Cavalier lawyer invading the Plymouth Colony, Morton may be discredited, but the evidence is clear that he was not universally despised in the Separatist Colony. This was an important reason why the Separatist Government felt obliged to put him down mightily fast.

The story is available from Morton himself and from the Separatists who suppressed him.<sup>16</sup> Although no historian has listed these revels in the regular theatrical column, please note that Morton's May-day celebration had the following "professional-stage" characteristics:

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 571.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 572-573.

<sup>15</sup> Esther Cloudman Dunn, *Shakespeare in America* (New York 1939), pp. 15-21.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan* (Boston 1883), pp. 276-282; William Bradford, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-243.

1. Indian warriors and maids, and English planters, in special costume (the Indians wore beaverskin coats).
2. Setting of planned effects, such as an eighty-foot pine, cut and reared up, with a pair of buckshorns nailed near the top, and an illustrated poem.
3. Singing of original songs for an imaginative purpose, with integrated dance.
4. Imaginative sound effects, through drums, guns, pistols, and other fitting instruments.<sup>17</sup>

If by quelling Morton, the Puritans were so naïve as to believe they had stamped out the first quiverings of the theatre, they were destined for great frustration. Music and dancing and fashion and acting, in the basic and best theatrical senses, increased and expanded all around them. Furthermore, the Church itself and the most intolerant "leaders" found themselves using these arts for grace-producing results. And where they did not, they found that they could not dry up their use.<sup>18</sup>

Although not founded by the Puritan, Thanksgiving was celebrated by him, and not for a day, but for a whole week. Amazing, in the light of our schoolboy teaching, is the truth that the first big Thanksgiving (the famous one, reported by Edward Winslow, of December 11, 1621) to the Puritan was for recreation, not for religious observance. It involved formal shows of fowling and exercise of arms for the Anglo-American and his Indian guests. It produced group games: leaping, running, jumping, and a variety of croquet. Note again: there was *no* religious service.<sup>19</sup>

Similar Thanksgivings appeared from 1630 on, but they were not annual, duty celebrations like ours, just special occasions for relaxation, with programs appropriate to the purpose.

In like manner fast days were celebrated—to appease the God who sent "blasted wheat, moulded beans, wormy pease, mildewed corn," drought and grasshoppers, Indian invasions, caterpillars, childhood epidemics, and heavy rains. These He sent in exchange for the people's wig-wearing, their sheltering of

<sup>17</sup> Morton, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-280; see also Henry Beston, *The Book of Gallant Vagabonds* (New York 1925), pp. 137-171.

<sup>18</sup> There are dozens of works detailing evidences of this. For good examples, see Alice Morse Earle, *Customs and Fashions in Old New England* (New York 1894); Henry W. Lawrence, *The Not Quite Puritans* (Boston 1928); Albert C. Addison, *The Romantic Story of the New England Puritans* (Boston 1912); and Samuel Sewall's *Diary*, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Earle, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-218, 221-222.

Quakers, and for not paying their ministers—or so the celebrations were announced and prepared for.<sup>20</sup>

The Fifth of November (Guy Fawkes' Day or "Pope's Day") was celebrated with creative fanfare. As part of the production, bonfires were raised; parades of men and boys in bizarre costumes were held; and most dramatic of all was the begging of ragged fantasics, usually children of Roman Catholic parents. In later years, the Pretender was added to the Pope and the Devil as a chief character in the mummary.<sup>21</sup>

Add to this the Salmon and Shad celebrations, when those worthies annually rode down the waves. How close are we to the ancient spring festivals which gave rise to the theatre in the East, at the dawn of theatrical things! And sheep-shearing time in Vermont and the Connecticut Valley which resembled, said the historian who read the eyewitness accounts, nothing so much as a scene from *The Winter's Tale*. A regular show was mounted in honor of the sheep-drivers, -herders, -washers, and -shearers. There were fitting music, food, and drink in abundance, fiddlers and peddlers and frolicking. Tents were raised for "*the honorees*," and even the sheep seemed to participate.<sup>22</sup>

Passing over the wolf-trapping, bearbaiting, cockfights, horse racing, shovelboard, dice, cards (the Devil's picture books), quoits, loggits, bowles, ninepins, and lotteries for church, charity, and education,<sup>23</sup> it is certainly apropos to mention a few items that would not have been overlooked by *Billboard* and *Variety*, had they been in existence at the time. These included animal shows, exhibitions of legerdemain, balloon shows, and puppet shows ("Pickle Herring," "Taylor ryding to Brentford," "Harlequin and Scaramouch"). By 1789, there were camel shows, with camels 19 hands high. But more than half a century before, there were competitive showings of the White Bear, the Sea Lion, and Other Strange Animals, for which admissions were charged in Boston taverns. Capping the climax was a "Sapient Dog" who could distinguish colors, do arithmetic, discharge loaded cannon, jump through a hoop, and tell the hidden card in a pack—and you could look your fill upon him, for 25 cents. Small wonder

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 231-233.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 236-239, 254-255.

that the great judge, Samuel Sewall, was grieved and amazed at the "Dances and Scenical Divertissements" all over the horizon.<sup>24</sup>

Small wonder, too, that as early as 1686, the lawmakers talked of restraining stage plays; and by 1749 Boston managed a first regular stage performance—probably Otway's *Venice Preserved*—followed at once by a stage censorship act, very stringent indeed. But heavy fines or no, for both actor and audience, private theatre, now in fullfledged form, went on clandestinely. And when, in 1797, the anti-theatre law was repealed, it was fully admitted that popular uprisings had prevented the prosecution of theatre managements, and had made of the law a dead letter.<sup>25</sup>

Be it noted that the theocratical governors were wasting their time in these prohibitory laws. First, because they did not succeed in squelching their profane competition, and second, because, as we shall in a moment see, what they themselves had been doing, since the 1620's, made these frantic little efforts look thin, pale, and tiny by comparison.

This brings us to the finale, the top of the Puritan theatre, America's first. Our evidence is inescapable that: (1) There was a Puritan theatre building; (2) there were regular, universally supported performances; and (3) there were actual materials, calculatedly and purposely theatrical, and theatrical effects.

The Puritan theatre building was, of course, the colonial meetinghouse. Originally, it was simple in construction but it was always imposing. It was usually in the exact center of the town, occupying the highest hill; sometimes the enormous brass weathercock on the steeple of the meetinghouse rose 200 feet above the street, "thrice as high as the highest chimney-cap." It was a landmark to townspeople and seamen alike.<sup>26</sup>

More than the physical center of the town, it was the moral and spiritual center. Distances were measured from it; but also customs, principles, public opinions were fixed and set in it. James Russell Lowell, as late as the second quarter of the Nineteenth Century, testified: "New England was all meeting-house when I was growing up."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 241-246.

<sup>25</sup> William W. Clapp, jr., *A Record of the Boston Stage* (Boston 1853), pp. 1-13.

<sup>26</sup> William Root Bliss, *Side-Glimpses from the Colonial Meeting-House* (Boston 1894), pp. 1-2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

At first it resembled a barn with cloven boards with neither paint nor plaster. There were holes in the floor for spittoons. Daylight came through the square openings protected by "shuts" and covered by small glass or paper windows made translucent by oil. It was cold, dark, and dilapidated, for the Council would generally refuse to keep it up—even to buy stoves and pipes and wood and stove attendance. Bats often got loose in it, scooting from their nests in the top through the house.<sup>28</sup>

Yet attendance upon it was compulsory, and, if you missed, your friends might soon see you in the stocks. You sat where you were placed, according to a scheme for "dignifying the meeting-house." Men and women sat on separate sides.<sup>29</sup>

See this picture: a square structure, plain benches on each side of a center aisle; inside, every man armed (except the minister and head deacons), and prepared for Indian invasion, fire, or disease. A special guard of soldiers sits on each side of the front door; a sentry is stationed in the turret; and armed watchmen are patrolling the streets as the people pray. In the large, lofty pulpit the minister stands, and beside him a huge hourglass patiently runs, the sands running through sometimes twice while he is preaching. A carpeted stairs leads down from the pulpit to the people like the ladder from Heaven.<sup>30</sup>

In later years the effects of prosperity became visible in the meetinghouse-theatre. The audience's dress had improved—silks and ribbons; hoods of silk camblet, faced with velvet; broadcloth coats in crimson and yellow instead of homespun; breeches of velvet and corduroy instead of buckskin—and even the minister now wore a Geneva gown of silk.<sup>31</sup>

The great door of the meetinghouse faced the country road—no object was so often seen by the people. Before it loitered travelers and taverngoers. On its bulletin boards were wolf's-heads for bounty, warnings, laws, and the big news of the town. First drums, and later many bells called the people to worship and to other performances.<sup>32</sup>

The regular performances in this theatre were on Sundays

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30, 7, 51.

<sup>29</sup> Oscar E. Maurer, *A Puritan Church* (New Haven 1938), pp. 10-30.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> Bliss, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 72.

and Thursdays. On Sundays, there were two—at 9, and at 2, each lasting about four hours. Psalm-singing took half an hour; prayers took an hour; the sermon filled the rest of the time. There were often diversions from loose children, snoring worshippers, and frozen sacramental bread rattling around in the plates.<sup>33</sup> But the service itself, in purpose and organization, was a theatrical thing: to dramatize Man's fate over and over again in horribly real and fantastic terms; to show sin in its killing splendor; to make Man feel the most grueling pity for himself and his lost soul, and terror; to make him tremble and imagine and resolve with all his might. In these terms, the service nearly always succeeded with its audience.

If anything of the dramatic were lacking in the Sunday services, that was made up for on Thursdays. Thursday was Lecture Day at or near the meetinghouse. It generally consisted of sublimely terrible examples: dramatic punishments in whipping posts; "hattered" men; chained women; the awarding of scarlet letters; a man caged with a beast for his sin.<sup>34</sup>

These shows were at the public expense and for the public benefit. The tense dramatics of the final scene of *The Scarlet Letter*, for example, were no unusual event. Offenders were whipped, and set in stocks, bilboes, or pillories in full gaze, and the people, for their souls' sake, had to watch. Often criminals and pirates were hanged, to the breathless excitement or stifled howls and groans of the multitude.<sup>35</sup> How better could the devastation of sin and the way to repentance be projected and staged?

But the great climax of the Puritan theatre was its literary material. In the Puritan sermon, the Puritan psalm, the Puritan witchcraft trial, American drama made a powerful beginning. Since the substance of these is so well known, it is necessary only to trace their effects. The sermon has been selected as the sample, especially since it was the chief Puritan dramatic device, and in effect wholly comprehensive.

In his penetrating analysis entitled *Literature and Theology in Colonial New England*, Professor Kenneth Murdock has emphasized the Puritan preacher's awareness of his dramatic role.

<sup>33</sup> Sanford Fleming, *Children and Puritanism* (New Haven 1933), pp. 22-25.

<sup>34</sup> Earle, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-236; see also Sewall, *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> Earle, *op. cit.*, pp. 251-252.

His deliberate address to the whole community; his direct appeal to the senses, and through them to understanding and action; his use of images for effect, although never for their own rapturous sake; and his homeliness that made for realism in this precarious world of the sea, the village, the field, and the inscrutable forest; all show the preacher's knowledge of drama and his ability to use it for his purpose. Anna Green Winslow in her *Diary*<sup>36</sup> often shows the effects of such hard preaching but also shows that it did not spoil her gayety or vanity. She noted that the sermon was always the dramatization of some Gargantuan contest: for example the darkness of human nature versus God's light, our sin being bounded only by the narrowness of our capacity. And if one turns to the mightiest of Puritan divines, Jonathan Edwards, or to any important Puritan divine for that matter, he will always find the same great struggles projected through the puissant machines of imagery, and visual and auditory action.<sup>37</sup>

In "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," Edwards even uses the figure: "the earth does not willingly yield her increase to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon. . . ."<sup>38</sup> Although a monologue, rather than a dialogue, who can deny that a sermon like this, rooted in dramatic purpose, artistically directed through literary crafts, delivered under its conditions and scenic effects, with the audience begging the skilful actor-preacher to "forbear," has more claim to being called "elemental drama" than the very mild tropes of the medieval church?

The Puritan preacher *tried* to stir fear and terror in his congregation. He set the stage with a frightening psalm; he softened his audience further with a diabolically gruesome cluster of prayers. He searched the scriptures, his imagination, and his physical and mental prowess for the fullest development of his aim. One preacher said it was the business of the minister to get men into an open boat, and to shove them off without sail, oar, rudder, or compass, thus leaving them in despair to the mercy of God.<sup>39</sup> This sense of God's mercy was the desired catharsis.

<sup>36</sup> Anna Green Winslow, *Diary* (Boston 1894), p. 26.

<sup>37</sup> See especially Percy Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (New York n. d., ca. 1949). *passim*.

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Works* (London 1840), II, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Fleming, *op. cit.*, pp. 36, 39.

Everywhere the sermonizer succeeded, at least in the arousement. One man testified:

When he was pricked at the heart, and saw himself hanging over the pit of everlasting burnings, his distress was so great for the space of half an hour, he was obliged to cover his mouth with his hand to prevent screaming.<sup>40</sup>

And the use of realistic subject matter, though not always artistic, was overwhelming:

A young and tender female, thrown into a violent sickness, half distracted with pain, or more than half delirious, will be visited by successive clouds of dark browed faces, which she scarcely recognizes as acquaintances and will be warned and prayed with, till she is brought into the most horrible state of fear and agitation, and till in fact, she is hastened out of the world, by the very means that are proposedly and no doubt, designedly used, to save her soul. From the moment she has departed—at the funeral and for weeks after—her awful example is held up; the expressions of her horror and despair are publicly repeated; and it is said perhaps in the very presence of her parents and friends, that she has gone to the other world an unconverted soul.<sup>41</sup>

Dr. Fleming has reported that long before the Great Awakening, Thomas Shepard made his congregations cry in agony. People detained at home would ask who was “wrought upon to Day, or whether there were any visible Effects of the word.” During the Awakening, all New England was “lashed into a state of religious frenzy,” and mostly by the preaching of the Word and concomitant effects. Some more common effects were convulsive weeping, wild cries of terror, screeches, wrung hands, floods of tears, swoonings, fallings down, tremblings, and tumblings. There was great agony and loss of bodily strength. Some lay tranced for a full twenty-four hours. And in these strivings, ministers competed.<sup>42</sup>

On top of physical effects were even greater mental effects. Melancholia, insanity, and suicide were not rare. Cotton Mather and Edwards called them the workings of the Devil. Perhaps of greatest poignancy were the moans of those who nearly departed

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-42.



their senses because they considered themselves forsaken and eternally lost.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, if we judge by the essentials—public expression, dramatic purpose and fulfillment, and co-ordinated effects—the American theatre began where the ancient Greek and medieval European theatres began, that is, in a powerful and revolutionary religious organization. From the time theatrical literature starts on the conventional stage, the Puritan power and example are repeated again and again, down to the present. From Royall Tyler's *The Contrast*, the first American comedy by a native American playwright, to *Mourning Becomes Electra*, the last great drama by our greatest craftsman, the Puritan stage is reproduced in character, essence, and theme.

And just as today's increasing clarity of the co-ordinated activities of the theatre helps our vision and proper appreciation of the earlier theatrical phenomena and values, moral included, so, our understanding of these beginnings is indispensable to a proper appreciation of the whole theatre that has grown and thrived in our midst.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

## THE DICTATORIAL NEW YORK CRITICS

*by*

WALTER KERR

It is generally recognized that, at the present time, the New York theatre is at the mercy of eight or nine daily newspaper reviewers. The new play which gets nine good notices the day after it has opened is almost certain to be a smash hit. The new play which gets nine bad ones is almost certain to close the following Saturday night. When, as often happens, there is a split decision in the press, a favorable balance—say, five to three—means that the show has a fair chance of earning back its investment, especially if it is bulwarked by the presence of stars. When a mixed vote goes against the play, its chances are nearly as negligible as if all the reviews had been bad. In New York today the verdict on a new production is returned within twenty-four hours, and it is virtually absolute.

What is not so generally recognized is the extreme peculiarity of this relationship between criticism and production. It is, I think, almost without parallel in the history of the theatre, or in the history of literary criticism generally. Those of us who work in the New York theatre, whether in production or in criticism, have become so accustomed to the life-or-death power of newspaper criticism that we take its existence, and its propriety, for granted. Yet even in the American theatre this power is of very recent origin—it does not extend back more than thirty or forty years—and in the great popular theatres of the past it finds no precedent whatsoever.

This is not to say that there has not been vigorous and virulent journalistic criticism in the past. There has been plenty of it. But it has nearly always taken the form of heated debate over the merits of a production which was then running in spite of the criticism, or possibly even because of it. The function of such criticism in the past has been to determine the absolute quality of a going project, of something already operating. The function of

New York criticism today is to determine in advance whether the project shall operate at all.

This is not only an extraordinarily unsatisfactory state of affairs from the point of view of writers, performers, and producers. It is a catastrophic inversion of the role of criticism itself, as unhealthy for the audience at large and for the critic at his post as it is for those who do the creating.

Strictly speaking, the critic has no place at the birth of a play at all. The theatrical experience is a personal one between author and audience, an intuitive meeting of minds which either takes place successfully or fails to do so, and the only legitimate judgment which can be passed upon a work of art is that passed by the audience. The play is written for the audience's pleasure; only the audience can say with any finality whether, or to what degree, it has been pleased.

An author projects his dramatic image from the stage; the audience receives it in the auditorium. Here are the positive and negative poles of an intuitive experience. Either a current of delight is set up between them—and the play is an incontrovertible success; or there is a failure of contact—and the play is an unsalvageable failure. The relationship of author and audience is intimate, immediate, and absolute. The measure of the author's work is the response which the audience finds itself making. From the actuality of this response there is no appeal; no amount of formal rationalization will change what has really happened, no amount of "correct" theorizing will alter the theatrical *fact* in any fundamental way. The audience has the first, and the last, word. Between stage and spectators exists a closed circuit, a straight line.

In the past there have been many attempts to modify, or even to reverse, the audience's instinctive response, but the audience has never lost a battle. Sir Philip Sidney may have decried the absurdities of the Elizabethan stage, but the audience loved those absurdities, patronized them, and preserved for us the most successful form ever to have been invented for the English-speaking theatre. Chapelin and Scudery may have found almost nothing right with *The Cid*, and may even have attempted to vote it off the stage. Today we examine the errors of Chapelin and Scudery, not those of Corneille. Molière was told that *The*

*School for Wives* was no play at all; thanks to the insight of the audience, it continues to play today.

Criticism often professes to find great, though hidden, value in plays which have failed in production. Try as it may, it cannot restore those plays to the stage or succeed in making audiences like them. The critic who attempts to reverse the judgment of an audience, to "instruct" it in taste, is the critic who deals in lost causes, the Don Quixote of the arts—a bore and a fool. Criticism also has a habit of finding fault with what has succeeded in performance. There are those who, working as purists and noting serious lapses of clarity and coherence, describe *Hamlet* as a "magnificent failure." The only trouble with this carefully worked-out judgment is that *Hamlet* has never failed. Shaw could not abide *The Importance of Being Earnest*. A critic may be brilliant, but his brilliance quickly turns to sophistry the moment he chooses to work apart from, and without complete dependence on, the initial verdict of the audience.

Ideally, then, the critic has no business in a theatre until the audience has returned its verdict. His work begins with that verdict, and rests upon it. The experience must *exist* before it can be analyzed. Once author and audience have met, however, there is a genuine function for the critic to perform. He enters the scene—a little later, so that the audience reaction will have time to come clear—as an observer. The first thing he is called upon to observe is the one root fact of theatrical life: the play is either getting over or it is not getting over. His task—this is the true historical role of criticism—is to explain the fact which confronts him. If the play is moving its audience, he asks *why*, and then carefully answers his own question. If it is not moving its audience, he asks *why not*, and again answers—to the best of his ability—the critical question he has posed.

The true identity of the critic is that of analyst and interpreter. His function is to reduce to rational terms an experience that has taken place in intuitive terms—to state objectively what has happened subjectively. His great contribution is that he is able to work out an almost mathematical equation for values which have hitherto existed spontaneously and imaginatively. He extracts a body of abstract principle from something that has been all flesh and blood. This, by the way, is a tremendous contribu-

tion: it helps the author to understand what he has done and what he has not done; it helps a younger author to learn his craft; it confirms the audience in its delight or helps make intelligible its disappointment.

All the literary criticism which we preserve and revere has been of this "interpretative" kind. Looking back over theatrical history, we do find another kind: "judicial" or, in effect, censorial criticism—the attempt to dictate to the audience. But "judicial" criticism has been so often in error, and in the last analysis so impotent, as to cast serious doubt on its validity and usefulness as a method. "Interpretative" criticism, on the other hand, has added steadily to our knowledge and has itself become one of the glories of the language.

The critic in his best—and, I think, his only valid—function serves as an onlooker who explains. If the relationship between author and audience can be taken as a straight line, the critic stands at a point of vantage where he can observe this straight line: the author, the audience, and the current which flows between them. He stands at the apex of a triangle, where he can look down upon its base. His broad and sympathetic point of view embraces the totality of the experience, but it does not intrude upon the experience or attempt to short-cut it in any way. The critic stands detached and alert, ready to note the success of one impulse along the line and the failure of another; later he will help us to understand the magic which has prompted our response, or the ineptitude which has kept us from responding. He is our *raisonneur*.

Obviously, what has happened in the New York theatre of today is that the critic has plunged down from his perch at the top of the triangle, cut across the direct line between author and audience, and inserted himself at a midway point in the experience. Here he assumes control of the current: when he decides that author and audience should come together, he brings them together; when he decides that contact should not be made, he shuts off the possibility forever. He anticipates and short-cuts the actual response of an audience, usurps its prerogative of personal judgment. He has taken on the judicial-censorial, rather than the interpretative, function, and, to the dismay of everyone, he has made it work.

It is possible to question the accuracy of this picture. It may be said, for instance, that the first-night audience with which a newspaper critic sees a show constitutes a valid author-audience relationship and that the critic, as he watches the show, is sensitive to the general response which is being made. In this light, he is simply working very rapidly: observing the line of contact and forming judgments about the play in the same instant. Quite apart from the extraordinary intelligence which would be required to accomplish this ambidental feat, certain real objections must be raised against any such notion. The first of these is that the opening-night audience in New York is not a genuine audience, but an assembly of specialized trade interests. Since the reviewer's next-day notice is immediately effective and determines whether or not there will be any paying customers in the theatre on the second night, it follows that no true audience ever sees the show—not, at least, until after the critic has handed down a favorable verdict. Further, the critic is himself perfectly aware of the specialized and unreliable nature of the first-night audience, and is at great pains to disregard it. It is a commonplace of contemporary New York criticism to acknowledge that the first-night audience "blistered its palms applauding" and then to point out that the applause was wholly undeserved. As the situation now stands, the critic's vote is polled without reference to audience behavior and prior to the appearance of any actual audience in the theatre. The verdict is reached *in vacuo*. The audience's right of judgment has been thoroughly usurped.

Small wonder that from time to time cries of outrage go up against the critics. Regularly, playwrights turn upon them, actors turn upon them, producers turn upon them. Elmer Rice once retired from the theatre rather than subject any more of his work to their absolute judgments. Elia Kazan was party to a paid advertisement which labeled them "the Jukes boys of journalism." The *Critics' Digest* circulates the rumor that Maxwell Anderson has written a letter to Brooks Atkinson of the *New York Times* in which he announces that he will write no more serious plays until Atkinson has left the *Times*. It is interesting to note, by the way, that all of these attacks have come from the creative people of the theatre. None has ever originated with that body whose prerogative has actually been usurped—the audience. And this

is, I think, an important clue to the situation in which we all now find ourselves.

Until now I have spoken of the critic as though he were an active factor in this situation. He isn't. He has not actually chosen to surrender his detached and objective position at the apex of the triangle. He has not deliberately fought his way down into the experience itself and forced himself between author and audience. He has not asked for the power of life and death over plays, has not arrogated it unto himself, has not bullied himself into the middle of things.

I doubt that there is a single New York critic who is happy with his total power or who believes that his possession of it is a healthy thing for the theatre. It has simply been handed to him, whether he wants it or not.

He couldn't have wrested this power from the hands of the audience if he *had* wanted to. The audience cannot be compelled to buy newspapers; having bought them, it cannot be compelled to turn to the drama pages; having turned to the drama pages, it cannot be compelled to read the critic; reading him, it cannot be compelled to abide by his opinion. If it elects to do all of these things, this has been a free choice, freely made—and probably for a reason.

Nor has the contemporary New York critic's compulsive power over the audience come about as a result of his incontrovertible brilliance. It is always conceivable, and it has sometimes been demonstrated in the past, that the stylistic force, the impeccable taste, or the clearly superior knowledge of an individual critic may earn for his work tremendous and terrifying personal influence. I think I shall offend no one by suggesting that our hurried and harried journalists are not of the tribe of Lessing, that they have not come into their present authority by the sheer power of their work. Some of their work is extraordinarily good, considering the circumstances under which it is turned out; but none of it is so irresistibly compelling as to have created, out of its own indisputable quality, the situation which now exists.

What has happened in the last thirty to forty years is that the audience has voluntarily surrendered its privilege of judgment. It has, in effect, abdicated. Somewhere along the line the New York audience reached an important decision: it no longer

wanted the opportunity to investigate and evaluate the theatre personally; it wanted instead to have this work done for it in advance. It deliberately chose to abide by the word of eight or nine journalists, to rely completely upon the combined opinion of these men.

That this is a free choice on the part of the audience is abundantly clear. Thirty or forty years ago journalistic criticism in New York was as severe as it is today, and in general as well written as it is today. It was also relatively powerless. It is legendary that George M. Cohan almost never got a good notice for one of his musical plays. Cohan himself was regularly attacked as brash, vulgar, and cheap. He was at the same time the most popular audience figure in New York, the man who owned Broadway. It is not necessarily to be supposed that the audience did not read what was written of him. It probably read the criticism of the day, weighed it, then went to the newest Cohan show and made up its mind for itself.

William Gillette forbade the quotation of criticism in his advertisements, no matter how favorable it might be. When his manager did at one time insert a favorable quote, Gillette was outraged. He felt himself demeaned by such tactics. If Gillette felt himself superior to daily criticism, and in no way dependent upon it, it was because he was *not* dependent upon it. His audiences were not wholly guided by it. They preferred to come and make their own decisions.

This was a healthy time, theatrically speaking. Criticism was perfectly free to say what it pleased, without bearing the whole responsibility for the financial state of the theatre and all its members. Producers, authors, actors were free to operate in direct relationship to their audiences, without agonizing sideglances at what they took to be the special interests of critics. Audiences went frequently to the theatre, under their own power, unpersuaded and uncontrolled, perfectly capable of speaking for themselves.

The factor of outspoken criticism is constant between the two periods. It is not criticism which has changed, or brought about the over-all change. The variable which has made all the difference is the audience. Forty years ago it could take a critic or leave him alone. Today it insists upon taking him.



But a still more important question remains to be asked: *why* has the audience changed its mind? Having freely asserted its right in one period, why has it freely surrendered that right in another? And is it really possible to shift the blame for the present dilemma from the tyrannical critic to a listless audience?

I think not. The audience is always pleasure-hungry, avid for whatever delights are available. If today it has become sluggish, wary, unassertive, and dependent, we must seek a still deeper cause, a further explanation for this uncharacteristic behavior.

The answer lies, as it always must, on the stage itself. Something has happened *on stage* in the last thirty or forty years which has so bored, so alienated, so distressed the audience that it has fled the theatre, surrendered all its rights in connection with the theatre, and begged for the protective guidance of men who are hired for the purpose. The critic is paid to venture nightly into the somehow terrifying theatre. Let *him* suffer. And then let him report which of the exhibits he finds there are least intolerable.

This is the situation as we now have it: the audience will not set foot in the theatre voluntarily; it must be pushed in by a set of nine "rave" notices. It is even possible that without those nine raves there would be no theatre at all.

The American audience has acquired a profound distrust of the theatre. It expects that the plays will be bad; it expects that each successive evening will be too dull for personal investigation; it expects that only very, very rarely will something even moderately rewarding come along; it expects that the experience of theatregoing will, in the natural course of things, be deadly; and it demands to be protected by a body of advance scouts.

We are not going to solve the present deadlock by focusing our attention, and our exasperation, upon nine journalists. Nor can they solve it for us by resigning their jobs en masse and instructing their respective newspapers to cease printing editorial opinion.

But we might very reasonably take a first step toward the solution of our problems by comparing the theatre of forty years ago with the theatre of today and asking what has been added to, or subtracted from, our stage fare that has caused the audience to throw up its hands in despair and rush to the newsstands for protection.

# PURE REPERTORY: NEW YORK THEATRE, 1809\*

by

BARNARD HEWITT

Specific information about the theatre in New York City in the first decade of the Nineteenth Century is for the most part scant and scattered. However, thanks to the short-lived *Rambler's Magazine and New York Theatrical Register*,<sup>†</sup> for one period of four months, from September 6, 1809 through January 16, 1810, we have a fairly complete picture in considerable detail. The Park was the only theatre in operation during those months, and not only did the *Register* review each performance there, but two of "Perambulator's" leading articles were devoted at least in part to it, and in addition the *Magazine* published correspondence and odd notes about the Park and its company.

Although this season falls in the last of a four-year period which Odell called "the most pointless in the whole history of the New York stage,"<sup>1</sup> I believe it deserves more attention than he gave it. This was the last season before the advent of George Frederick Cooke, whose success gave such impetus to the visiting star system—this was the last season of pure repertory. Drawing largely on *The Rambler's Magazine*, I should like to present a picture of repertory undefiled: of the theatre building, the audience, the plays, the acting company, the costumes, and the scenery.

The Park Theatre was almost twelve years old at the beginning of the 1809-1810 season, but it had apparently never been completely finished. Asmodeus in "Green Room Chit-Chat" humorously reported that

The fines for losing or forgetting black lead pencils, presented by the man-

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† Published by D. Longworth, at the Shakespeare Gallery, 11 Park Avenue, New York City: Volume I (three issues) covers performances from September 6, 1809 through December 11, 1809 (when the Park Theatre closed for the holidays); Volume II (one issue) covers performances from January 1, 1810 through January 16, 1810. References to volume and page will hereafter be indicated in the text. Quotations reproduce the punctuation and capitalization of the original.

<sup>1</sup> George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* II (New York 1927), 342.

agers to the performers, to mark O.P. and P.S., are to be appropriated to the exterior decoration of the theatre. A fine colossal figure of Apollo is to be placed in the cupola, and a statue of Shakespeare, supported by tragedy and comedy, will grace the front. . . . (I, 110)

The exterior was not only unfinished but Perambulator, viewing his city with a critical eye in the fall of 1809, remarked:

. . . I was struck by the barbarous front of the theatre . . . resembling a miserable barrack, stretching its crazy shoulders over a dead wall of brick, here and there interspersed with a few broken panes of glass. . . . Is this . . . the *grand* front of the *new* theatre of New-York? Do these bare joists and filthy walls bespeak wealthy proprietors? Do these copious streams of *indescribable distillation*, which run from its sides along the pavement, indicate the cleanliness or delicacy of the managers? (I, 10)

The interior presented a different picture. It had been re-decorated for the new season by the scenic artist, John Joseph Holland,<sup>2</sup> and the critic of the *Register*, after describing the decoration in detail, declared: ". . . the alterations throughout are most judicious, and the *tout en semble* airy and beautiful." (I, 18) And Perambulator, who found the outside so repulsive, termed the inside: ". . . in point of decoration . . . very little inferior to the handsomest theatres of France, Italy, and England." (I, 14)

The opening night audience found changes in the lighting also. The patent oil lamps by which the auditorium had formerly been illuminated were replaced by "a large and brilliant chandelier, suspended from the dome, with two of corresponding richness on the right and left of the curtain, together with the smaller ones dispersed round the second and third tiers of boxes," which, according to our critic, furnished "a new and improved light to the audience part of the house." (I, 18)

Although Perambulator praised the decoration, he found fault with the arrangement of the house. Somewhat deaf, he liked to sit near the front of the pit, and he complained:

. . . I could see nothing of what was going on above. It was like being in a well. I could hear, it is true; but the sounds came so confusedly to my ear from the mouths of the actors aloft, that I could not distinguish above

<sup>2</sup> Born in London in 1776, Holland, who is spoken of as an "architect" by Dunlap, served his theatre apprenticeship under Marinelli at the Italian Opera House. Wignell brought him to the United States in 1796, and he was the designer for the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia until 1807 when Cooper brought him to New York to alter and redecorate the Park Theatre. In 1813 he was co-manager of the Anthony Street Company at the New Olympic. He died not long before the Park Theatre burned down in 1820.

one word in five. . . . an uncommon noise under the stage, apparently made by the actors dressing themselves. [The supers dressed under the stage immediately behind the orchestra pit.] I could plainly hear . . . a number of voices hawling out for hats, caps, helmets, swords, and daggers; and ever and anon a violent contest took place for the possession of the rouge-box. (I, 13)

If the stage was too high for the front of the pit, perhaps it was just right for the boxes, which Perambulator thought

. . . much too high to give that cheerful effect so much desired in a theatre, where the audience are frequently more delighted in seeing and being seen among themselves than in attending to the performance. They are too much like the galleries of a methodist meeting-house. The second tier of boxes might be at least two feet lower, and the third in proportion. . . . (I, 14)

According to Odell, the house probably seated 2,372: 1,272 in the boxes, 500 in the pit, and 600 in the gallery.<sup>3</sup> It was seldom full and all too often more than half empty. I have found no record of the admission prices during this season, but, on the basis of occasional gross receipt figures and the scale of prices in this and other theatres at about this time, one may hazard a guess that seats in the boxes cost one dollar, in the pit fifty or seventy-five cents, and in the gallery twenty-five or thirty-seven and a half cents.

The audience was divided on class lines. The respectable persons of fashion sat in the first and second tiers of boxes. Some of them, as Perambulator suggested, came less to see than be seen and consequently were sometimes an annoyance to more serious playgoers. Two anonymous correspondents wrote:

The gentleman who sat in the right hand stage box [on the evening of the first presentation of *Venoni*] screwing up his delicate mouth, and simpering at the ladies, is requested to examine himself in the glass, while in the act of exercising these amiable oglings; and he will perceive that it was not without reason that the persons who observed him imagined he was affected with st. Vitus's dance. (II, 45)

The young ladies, too, made their presence known. Perambulator reported:

. . . I heard a *trio* . . . censuring the indecent habiliments of the stage heroine, whilst they themselves were almost *nudities*. "Moy God!" ex-

<sup>3</sup> Odell, *op. cit.*, II, 285.

claims one, "what a shame it is for that there woman to expose her shapes in that way. I wonder how any modest person can *visit* the theatre." "Very true," replied miss Dumpling, . . . drawing her shawl a little forward on her bare shoulders, "I have often wondered why the managers suffer their play-actresses to dress a *shame* to be seen. If it was me, I should not be able to show my face on the stage." (I, 13)

The more serious and less fashionable theatregoer, like Perambulator, preferred the pit. The third tier of boxes was still the haunt of the fairly affluent but not very respectable element. *The Register's* critic twice complained of the third tier's "noisy and riotous conduct" and recommended that "the doorkeepers either show such patrons one story higher [to the gallery] or else to the street." (I, 100) He appears to have taken for granted that the gallery, patronized by the poor and uncultivated, would be noisy and boisterous.

However, such boisterousness seems to have got out of bounds only twice in these four months. On New Year's Day, the première of the younger Colman's new musical spectacle, *The Africans*, drew the best house (upwards of \$1,700) since the theatre's erection, and in an overflowing of the holiday spirit someone threw a fork at Mrs. Oldmixon "when singing a bravura song." (II, 26) Even more uproarious was the evening on which a Mr. Morrell, apparently a clerk in a Broadway shop, was so presumptuous as to essay the part of Rolla in Sheridan's *Pizarro*. Our critic described the audience on that occasion with heavily class-conscious sarcasm:

. . . not a shop but poured forth its *noblesse*—young and old—masters and apprentices—small fry and large fry. . . . Clubs, sticks and bludgeons, and shelelahs were laid under contribution; and it was manifestly determined to support *the pride of the fraternity*, at the expense of all the walls and wainscots, partitions, and benches of the theatre. A complete tempest, torrent, and whirlwind of applause raged from the very commencement of the piece. (I, 207-210)

Even at its best, our critic did not think highly of the Park audience. On September 20 he wrote:

This moral and instructive tragedy [Moore's *The Gamester*] one of the best that is exhibited on the stage, and with the Forty Thieves as an afterpiece, could not produce an audience half as numerous as that which attended the preceding night's representation [Dunlap's *Abaellino* and Bickerstaffe's *The Romp*]. We record this as a proof of the vitiated and depraved taste of the city of New-York. (I, 22)

Nevertheless, the critic felt that audience opinion, in some instances, should bear considerable weight. When the curtain fell on the première of Leigh's *Grieving's a Folly* "amidst salutes of hisses," he censured the management for not paying sufficient respect to public opinion "when they persisted in announcing the piece for repetition after three rounds of decided disapprobation." (I, 99)

What theatrical fare was provided for this audience? From September 6 through January 16, the theatre was open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings during the first two months; during the last two months a Saturday evening performance was added. There were fifty-six performance nights, in which New Yorkers had the opportunity to see thirty-six different long plays by twenty-three different authors and almost as many afterpieces. Shakespeare was represented by two performances of *Richard III*, by one each of *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Much Ado*, and by an afterpiece of *The Taming of the Shrew* as cut by David Garrick.

However, except for a single performance of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, Shakespeare was the only "old" author in the repertory. The Restoration was represented but feebly by Otway's *Venice Preserved* and Mrs. Centlivre's *The Wonder*. Wycherley, Van Brugh, and Farquhar, who had still been popular twenty years before, were now too coarse for public taste. Sentimental comedy and drama and musical-dramatic spectacle made up the bulk of the offerings. Among the more popular pieces were Dimond's thriller, *The Foundling of the Forest* (seven performances), Monk Lewis' shocker, *Adelgitha, or The Fruits of a Single Error* (three performances), Sheridan's spectacular *Pizarro* (three performances), and Colman's colorful, musical fantasy, *The Forty Thieves* (five performances).

Typical of repertory in America at this time, native playwrighting was represented only by *Abaellino*, one of the weaker efforts of William Dunlap. Typical of repertory everywhere, there were only four new plays and one revival. Lewis' *Venoni* and Mrs. Inchbald's *To Marry or Not to Marry* were introduced with moderate success, but the première of *Grieving's a Folly* and the revival of Joanna Baillie's *De Montfort* were failures. We should not infer, however, that the audience did not want new plays. It

is more significant, in this respect, that the biggest attraction was *The Africans*, which was not only brand-new but was in addition full of sensational drama, broad comedy, music, and spectacular scenery.

The company of actors which presented this repertory was generally considered to be, if not the best, certainly the second best in America. But it opened this season somewhat below top strength. In Cooper<sup>4</sup> it could boast of having the leading actor both for tragedy and for comedy yet to appear on the American stage, an actor whom an 1809 Letter to the Editor of *The Rambler's Magazine* called the "Colossus of the stage in point of theatric genius. . . ." (I, 84); in Twaits<sup>5</sup> it had a versatile comedian whose laurels were challenged only by Joseph Jefferson, the grandfather of the great Joseph Jefferson, of the Philadelphia company; yet it had no real leading actress and no first-rate actor of male character roles in high comedy. And there were other weaknesses in lesser positions.

This was due in part to general conditions and in part to specific bad luck. Mrs. Johnson,<sup>6</sup> a favorite leading actress of previous seasons, and her husband who was useful in minor roles, were hourly expected from London—and never came. Harwood,<sup>7</sup> who for five years delighted New York audiences in an important line of high comedy old men, had been stricken with what proved a mortal illness. As a result, some of Harwood's roles fell to Tyler,<sup>8</sup> who, though an able actor, was nearing the end of his career, and his memory was failing him. Time after time our critic remarked that Tyler "knew not a word of what he had to say." (I, 96) Other Harwood roles fell to a certain Doyle,<sup>9</sup> an ex-

<sup>4</sup> Thomas A. Cooper was born in England in 1776 and brought to Philadelphia by Wignell where he made his American debut as Macbeth on December 9, 1796.

<sup>5</sup> William Twaits, too, was born in England in 1781. In 1803 William B. Wood brought him over to act at the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia. Cooper brought him to New York when Cooper assumed managership of the Park Theatre. He died in 1814.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth (Mrs. John) Johnson with her husband appeared in America for the first time during the 1795-1796 season in Boston with the Old American Company and in New York on February 10, 1796. Except for several absences in England, she was a leading actress in New York for over twenty years. She died in 1810.

<sup>7</sup> John E. Harwood, born in England in 1771, was one of the original company recruited by Wignell for the opening of the Chestnut Street Theatre in 1794. Dunlap brought him to New York ten years later where he remained a great favorite until his death in 1809.

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Tyler, a barber before he became an actor, had been with the Park Theatre since its opening in 1797. He retired in 1810, reappearing in a single benefit performance at the Anthony Street Theatre in 1815.

<sup>9</sup> Doyle first appeared in New York at Vauxhall Gardens in 1808. He joined the Park Company for the 1808-1809 season. What became of him afterwards cannot be discovered.

military man and a comparative novice on the stage. He appears to have had some talent for Irish characters but was, to quote our critic, "a sorry substitute for Harwood." (I, 96)

In this general reshuffling of the male roles, important serious parts fell, now to the inexperienced Doyle, now to a Mr. Robertson,<sup>10</sup> who appears to have been competent in a somewhat limited range of secondary characters, and even to David Poe, who is remembered, poor fellow, only as the father of Edgar Allan Poe. The best the editor of *The Rambler's Magazine* could find to say about Poe was ". . . if he would take pains he is by no means contemptible." (I, 27, n.) These weaknesses in the male line were perhaps most grievously felt in the Shakespearean productions, where, though the lead might be well played by Cooper, the support in many scenes would be very bad indeed. For instance, our critic, after complimenting the leads in *Much Ado*, specified the painful inadequacies of the minor players and advised the management to avoid, until the company could be strengthened ". . . such pieces as require an extraordinary number of hands." (I, 107)

Weakness on the feminine side may have been even more serious. True, there was Mrs. Oldmixon,<sup>11</sup> perhaps unequalled in America in spirited comedy and farce and as a singing actress, but she was limited to secondary roles. The parts, which should have been Mrs. Johnson's, were distributed among Mrs. Young,<sup>12</sup> who had beauty and youthful appeal (these had an effect on our critic; he kept pleading with her to show more spirit) and was adequate for first or second "walking ladies" but who lacked the depth and fire for the heroines of tragedy and the nerve for the heroines of comedy; Mrs. Twaits,<sup>13</sup> who had the depth and fire for tragedy but seems to have lacked personal

<sup>10</sup> (Robertson) A Hopkins "Robinson" appeared at the John Street Theatre in 1791-1792 and at the Park in 1800-1801. The name changed to Robertson before 1809. He appears to have begun as a theatre tailor. Notice of his death in 1819 mentioned his bravery in the Richmond Theatre fire.

<sup>11</sup> Mrs. Oldmixon (nee Georgina Sidus) had achieved success at the Haymarket and Drury Lane Theatres in London as Miss George before Wignell brought her to Philadelphia or the original Chestnut Street company. There and in New York, where she appeared from time to time after 1796, she was extremely popular until her retirement in 1814. She died in 1836.

<sup>12</sup> Mrs. Charles Young (nee Foster) with her husband first appeared at the Park Theatre in 1805; the 1808-1809 season they were in Boston; in 1817 they were once more at the Park. Mr. Young managed the Richmond Hill Theatre in New York 1832-1833.

<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Twaits, (nee Elizabeth Westray) began her career on the New York stage in 1801 under Dunlap's management. A widow, she married Twaits in 1808. She died in 1813.



charms; and, finally, Elizabeth Poe,<sup>14</sup> who, unlike her unfortunate husband, seems to have had some talent—at least in her somewhat limited line, “the singing chamber maid.” She was reported “sprightly without being fantastic and able to act the hoyden without being gross or mawkish” (I, 212), but she lacked the softness necessary for pathetic roles, and this season she was called upon to attempt Ophelia and Desdemona.

Reinforcements, when they came, improved the company, but hardly made it first rate. Mrs. Mason,<sup>15</sup> “from the Theatre Royal, London,” arrived on October 23, 1809 and proved excellent in Beatrice (I, 106), Lady Teazle (I, 189), Kate (I, 189), and other comedy leads, but she was disappointing as Portia (I, 108), as Belvedera in *Venice Preserved* (I, 191), and as Mrs. Beverly in *The Gamester* (I, 101). The company was still without a competent tragic actress and remained so. On October 25, Simpson,<sup>16</sup> “from Dublin and Edinburgh,” made his debut and proved a spirited and accomplished juvenile lead in comedy and romantic drama. With his advent, Cooper went starring elsewhere, leaving no one to play such roles as Othello, Richard III, and Macbeth.

That some members of the company were careless of the playwright's text and slovenly in pronunciation we gather from our critic's comments on Robertson's performance as Buckingham in *Richard III*. He complained of “thundrin,” “wondrin,” and of the alteration of “their fears have” to “their fears has.” (I, 196) Departures from the text, in this repertory company as in the majority of them, were most egregious in the new play. Because of inadequate rehearsal, at the opening of a new play not only were characterizations not set, let alone polished, but frequently the actors did not even know the lines.<sup>17</sup>

We can get some notion of the style of acting to be seen on the Park stage in 1809 from our critic's comments on Mrs. Ma-

<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth Arnold Poe had a considerable career in the theatre, playing in Charleston, Richmond, Philadelphia, Boston, and New York during the years from 1798 to 1811. She died in 1811. Her son, Edgar Allan Poe, was born on January 19, 1809 while his parents were with the Federal Street Theatre in Boston.

<sup>15</sup> Mrs. Mason stayed on at the Park Theatre through 1810-1811, reappearing there in 1818-1819, then Mrs. Entwistle.

<sup>16</sup> Edmund Simpson (1784-1840) was with the Park Theatre for over thirty years as actor, as co-manager with Stephen Price, and as sole manager during the long periods when Price was in Europe.

<sup>17</sup> See the reviews of *To Marry or Not to Marry* (I, 93), *Grieving's a Folly* (I, 91), and *Wild Oats* (II, 32-33).

son's performances in pathetic roles. Of her Belvedera he wrote:

. . . The same fault that marked her Mrs. Beverly [excess of grief] was the blemish of this night's performance. . . . There is no fault in a good actress, that is not more readily pardoned by a New-York audience than a superabundance of tears. Mrs. Melmoth [Charlotte Melmoth (1749-1823)] was remarkable for this, but she possessed a skill in the management, that enabled her to resist the popular disapprobation: Mrs. Whitlock [Eliza Kemble Whitlock (1762-1836), sister of Mrs. Siddons] is another and less fortunate instance; she absolutely cried herself to death, and was near drowning the whole *dramatis personae* by the copiousness of her inundation. (I, 191-192)

We can learn even more from his comments on Mr. Robertson's performance in *The Africans*. (II, 27-29) He began by noting that the actor had improved by imitating Cooper, but he warned the young man to avoid Cooper's "tedious and painful precision" of enunciation, and his "dull, monotonous, phlegmatic manner of delivering commonplace conversation," and the "turgid bellowing with which a glow of passion is heavily lumbered forth." He continued his warning by urging Robertson to avoid

. . . that see-sawing of the hands—that formal and studied gesture which requires all the finish and grace of Mr. Cooper to make it endurable—that stage trickery which, instead of suiting the action to the word and making the gesture spring from the quick impulse of feeling, induces the actor to be continually throwing himself into some statuelike attitude, so that a sudden glow of emotion or burst of passion is kept suspended until the actor has fixed himself into some pretty posture. . . .

Becoming a little passionate himself, the critic went on to declare that he was sick of "half-finished copies of Mr. Cooper," of the "straddle-bag attitudes . . . that body at full-length, from point of one finger, to the extremity of the opposite toe." Apparently, Cooper's genius either concealed these mechanics most of the time or breathed life into them, but in his imitators we catch a glimpse of the empty form only—the style of the day.

What of the costuming? Costume was ordinarily the responsibility of the individual actor. Twaits was frequently praised for being "well-dressed"; on one occasion our critic declared that "attention to dress was one of his greatest perfections." (I, 205) Of Cooper in *Abellino*, he complained: "The bandit was dressed without effect—nothing to terrify, nothing to affright, nothing to

awe." (I, 188) And he made fun of Doyle and others "who dress the fine gentleman with a round hat fiercely stuck on one side of the head, and a white pocket-handkerchief . . . a never to be omitted appendage dangling from the skirts of the coat," like a misplaced shirt tail. (II, 34)

Doubtless leading actors like Twaits and Cooper had considerable wardrobes of their own, but even they could not have been adequately equipped for as many different parts as they were required to play, and it is clear from the remarks of our critic that the theatre had a common wardrobe which could be drawn upon by all the members of the company. Mr. Tyler as Colonel Britton in *The Wonder* "was badly dressed—his coat wanted the wardrobe tack in it to make it fit; it seemed as though it had been let down . . . and never been taken up again." (I, 190) He was even more sarcastic about Governor Heartall's costume in *The Soldier's Daughter*:

. . . if the coat in which his excellency appeared, is not entailed upon the character, we would advise him without delay to provide one more *be-fitting* his rank. Against its quality we can certainly say nothing; for it must be an excellent piece of stuff to have stood, for twenty years, the chops and changes to which it has been subject. There has not been a governor under the present or any former reign as far as we recollect, no matter what his size, whom this self-same coat did not fit. It is but putting in or letting out a tack or two and it suits every body: to-day it is turned down to the standard of *five feet three* in captain Doyle, and to-morrow raised up, by a double tack, to *three feet six* in mr. Twaits. It has covered the broad shoulders of fat Jack [Harwood], and by the same necromantic power, if necessity required, it would be adapted to the slender forms of Robertson and Collins. But it begins now to be a little soiled. . . . (I, 188)

There is evidence, however, that occasionally a real effort in costume was made, presumably by the management, for some of the spectacular pieces. In *De Montfort*, our critic noted that "the dresses were rich and splendid." (I, 188) On the other hand, for *The Africans*, the costumes "were deficient in uniformity and in some instances quite inapposite." (II, 25) Some of the native Africans were in what looked like Turkish costume, the other tribe in modified Greek dress. Perhaps all available energy and money had been expended on other aspects of that colossal production.

In Holland the company had an able scenic artist. But most plays required little more than the standard interior and exterior wings and shutters drawn from the accumulated stock. A new play might be the occasion for a little new scenery; our critic noted this in his remarks on the opening of *Grieving's a Folly*: "The most attractive part of this evening's exhibition was a new street and a new garden scene. . . . They are a rich specimen of mr. Holland's taste, skill, and genius." (I, 100) The scenery for *The Forty Thieves*, held over from the previous season, was called "a chef d'oeuvre of Holland and his assistants; than whom few European artists are more excellent." (I, 83) The unsuccessful revival of *De Montfort* presented "new scenery mostly of gothic architecture finished in Mr. Holland's best style." (I, 188) But the scenic artist's greatest effort was probably expended on *The Africans*. Our critic noted that the scenery was "picturesque and effective, and the town in flames managed with fine effect." (II, 25) That the theatre did not fully satisfy the public's appetite for spectacular scenery is suggested by the presence on Broadway at this time of "an excellent panorama of New-York, painted by the joint efforts of messieurs Holland and Reinagle. . . ." <sup>18</sup> (I, 157)

This was New York theatre in 1809—this was New York theatre under the repertory system. It provided a large repertory of plays, on the whole well acted in the classic style, largely in stock scenery and in stock costumes. Nevertheless, the theatre did not satisfy its audiences. Although the Park had no competition during the four months surveyed, it was often less than half full, and apparently never made enough money to entice its owners into completing the exterior or into keeping it clean and in good repair. The management could not afford to maintain a really first-rate company, strong, not merely here and there, but from top to bottom. Shakespeare, which should have been the anchor of the repertory, suffered. Clearly, the visiting star, when he became the rule, merely accentuated a defect, already existing in pure repertory.

The star system was to have its day, however, for the very next season the Park was packed to overflowing to see George

<sup>18</sup> Hugh Reinagle, son of Alexander Reinagle, was first a pupil and later assistant to Holland. He became a leading scene painter in New York, where he remained until 1830 when James H. Caldwell brought him to New Orleans. There he died of cholera in 1834.

Frederick Cooke, England's brilliant if undependable star, in his line of Shakespearean and other standard roles. Apparently the people were no longer satisfied with the constant repetition, season after season, of the same plays, done in the same scenery with the same actors in the same costumes. They wanted something new—either new plays of the exciting and spectacular sort needing special scenery and costumes, or new and exciting actors. The repertory system was not geared for the production of many new plays, especially those that could not be staged with the scenery and costumes on hand, but new leading actors could easily be added to the permanent company for brief engagements. The day of repertory, pure and undefiled, had come to its end. The new day of the visiting star was at hand.

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# GREECE THROUGH THE STAGE DOOR

*by*

PAUL BRUCE PETTIT

The generous co-operation of Mr. George Theotokas, General Director of the National Theatre of Greece, in supplying many details regarding the organization and history of the National Theatre is gratefully acknowledged. P. B. P.

The Age of Pericles hangs as a fog between modern Greece and the Western world. The bulk and worth of the classic tradition makes it difficult for us to realize that Greece today is pursuing a cultural course with a healthy degree of independence from its own classic heritage. The American visitor to Athens is surprised to discover that more often than not "Greek theatre" to a Greek is the National Theatre just off Omonia Square, the busiest commercial area in the capital, rather than the lyrical ruins of the Theatre of Dionysus some two miles away at the foot of the Acropolis.

The National Theatre of Greece has a significance today that far exceeds the place it holds in the life of the average Athenian. It is of especial interest at this point in the development of the theatre in America since the Greek organization presents a valuable study in theatre planning on a national level and in successful theatre operation in a small and financially insecure nation. From a still broader point of view, the Theatre is a mirror which reflects with remarkable fidelity many of the strengths and weaknesses of this most Western-disposed nation in the Near and Middle East.

Although a Greek theatre of sorts existed prior to the Greek War of Independence in 1821, Greek theatrical activities became known outside of the country only later in the century through the activities of a number of Greek actresses of doubtful ability who barnstormed as "stars" in Russia, Roumania, and Turkey. The acting and production levels of these companies were low and caused genuine concern to that small group of well-educated

Greeks who had had first-hand contact with the progressive theatre enterprises in western Europe, especially with Antoine's Théâtre Libre (1887) and Brahm's Freie Bühne (1889). So great was the impact of these projects upon the Greek creative mind that the Government was approached with the idea for the establishment of a state-supported theatre. The Government reacted favorably, and in 1901 the Royal Theatre was opened under the patronage of George I. The theatre building (virtually unchanged fifty-one years later) could have as easily risen in any *fin de siècle* provincial European capital as in Greece: monumental façade, uncomfortable seats, sight-lineless balconies, tiered boxes pivoted audienceward. But the expansiveness of the Theatre's office space, the size of its stage, and the apparently limitless recesses of its backstage areas certainly more than compensate for its numerous turn-of-the-century gaucheries. Many of the virtues that make the old Prinzregent Theater in Munich even today one of the finest in Europe are happily embodied in the Royal Theatre in Athens.

The Royal Theatre soon found that it had a difficult course to follow: the inspiration was admittedly French and German but the results had to be Greek in spirit. The early years were marked by a large number of productions of Shakespeare based upon the German interpretation and scholarship. These productions, except for language and the nationality of the directors and actors, were not "Greek," and this blending of the two cultures produced only mediocre theatrical results. However, the German and French roots of the Theatre did give the Greek actors and directors a feeling of order, discipline, and precision, and a recognition of the values of ensemble acting which had theretofore been totally lacking in the Greek theatre and which must have had much to do with the concise direction and acting accepted as the norm in the Greek theatre of today.

Unsettled internal conditions and the effect of the rising tide of international unrest upon Greece necessitated the closing of the Royal Theatre in 1908, and not until 1930 had the country achieved sufficient stability to permit the resumption of Government participation in theatrical matters. By then Greece was a republic under the premiership of the illustrious Eleutherios Venizelos, so it was to the "National Theatre" that the charter

of a public institution was granted. Production activities were not actually resumed until 1932 when *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus was presented at the Royal Theatre (the building itself retained its regal title even during the Republic).

When the Monarchy was restored in 1935 the National Theatre continued to operate under the republican charter with minor changes being made to have it conform to the terminology of a monarchy.

The National Theatre is governed by two interrelated bodies: the Board of Directors and the Artistic Committee. The Board is directly concerned with matters of policy and finance and forms the liaison between the Government and the Theatre. The Artistic Committee is directly responsible for actual production details. The Board consists of eleven members, all of whom are appointed by Royal Decree. The General Director of the Theatre is a member of the Board and is appointed for an unlimited period by the Crown upon the recommendation of the other members of the Board. The appointment may be revoked at any time. The very fact, however, that the current incumbent, Mr. George Theotokas, has occupied the position since February 1945 would indicate that the office is not subject to capricious governmental interference. The other members of the Board are appointed for two-year terms with the possibility of an unlimited number of reappointments.

The Artistic Committee is composed of one member of the Board who serves as its president; the General Director; the Director of Repertory, whose specific duty it is to make recommendations regarding play selection; the four *régisseurs*, or "working" directors, of the Theatre; and two specialists in theatre (usually critics!) appointed by the Ministry of Education upon the recommendation of the Board of Directors. The Artistic Committee decides upon the repertory for the season, designates directors, chooses casts, selects designers, and then submits its decision to the Board of Directors for final approval.

The National Theatre receives more than fifty per cent of its financial support from a small tax that the Government places upon all tickets sold to public performances, films included. At present the Government subsidy is about 200,000,000 drachmai (approximately \$13,000) per month throughout the seven-or



eight-month season that terminates at the end of May. The sale of tickets (\$.60 top, \$.27 minimum) accounts for an average of 150,000,000 drachmai (\$10,000) per month. This monthly budget of slightly over \$23,000 is sufficient to cover all expenses including salaries. Needless to say, production expenses are microscopic compared with ours; for example, the top salary received by an actor is 2,600,000 drachmai (about \$154) per month, and the "bit" players receive 900,000 drachmai (\$60).

The Board of Directors realized that the continuing success of the theatre depended in part upon an adequate supply of properly trained actors, and, to this end, established a dramatic school in connection with the Theatre. Fifty students are now enrolled in the school's three-year program of studies in acting, the dance, swordplay, and theory under the direction of a faculty of ten. Third-year students are eligible for small roles in the regular productions of the National Theatre.

History would indicate that any theatre operating as a function of the government finds it necessary to follow a somewhat conservative pattern if it is to receive the general support of the taxpayer and legislator. The National Theatre of Greece is no exception. Ever since the 1930 reorganization, the Artistic Committee has concentrated almost exclusively upon Greek classics and more recent "classics" of the American and European stages. No one ever questioned the value of the program, but General Director Theotokas and his *régisseurs* felt that too many worthwhile plays were remaining unproduced merely because they were outside the "classic" category. The matter was ingeniously resolved in the fall of 1950 with the creation of the "Afternoon Stage"; a producing unit designed to give greater opportunities to young actors and to bring to the Greek stage those worthwhile plays which could not properly fit into the regular repertory of the National Theatre. The Afternoon Stage is not in continuous production, but when functioning it presents plays four afternoons a week for a period of two weeks or longer.

In addition to the launching of this highly successful innovation the National Theatre instituted in 1950 the *Matinée Poétique*, a series of afternoons devoted to the reading of modern Greek poetry by outstanding members of the National Theatre company.

Because of transportation, financial limitations, and the small number of adequate modern theatres in Greece, the National Theatre has to date been largely Athenian in tone. Since its widely acclaimed productions of *Hamlet* and *Electra* in London and Frankfort in 1938 and its tour in 1947 to Egypt and Cyprus, the Theatre's activities have been limited largely to productions in the Royal Theatre, to an annual spring tour to Salonika in northern Greece, and to the annual fall season of Greek classics in the handsome second-century Roman theatre of Herodes Atticus in the shadow of the Acropolis. In August of 1951, however, the Theatre resumed an earlier policy of producing at the ancient theatre at Delphi, and presented at the most gloriously situated of all classic theatres Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. This production was repeated the following month in the Herodes Atticus theatre in Athens. The Directorial Staff of the National Theatre recognizes the fact that the Theatre's activities at present are too concentrated in the Attic area, but it has already made elaborate plans for greater national participation in the program against the day when Greece reaches a greater degree of economic stability.

When speaking of the significance of the National Theatre of Greece I applied the term "mirror" to it. The word was chosen with care for through the Theatre we can see a bit more clearly into the heart of the Greek people themselves. This is as it should be, for a national theatre to be worthy of its name must be indissolubly bound to the soul of the nation it serves.

Greece, perhaps more than the United States, is a "government-centered" country. That is to say, the private citizen's most casual act or statement is fraught with political overtones; "forming cabinets" rivals a noisy game similar to backgammon for popularity in the *tavernas*; the latest government "scandal" occupies ninety-five per cent of the space in the nation's press and ninety-nine per cent of the country's thought. This phenomenon was recognized by Edmond About one hundred years ago when writing of the Greek people: "The men are in the market-place of their village, occupied in arranging the destinies of Europe; . . ."\* It is not surprising, therefore, that the National Theatre has not escaped the deadening influence of this intense and end-

\* Edmond About, *Greece and the Greeks of the Present Day* (New York 1857), p. 143.

less "politicking." As I have mentioned earlier, today there is little indication that politics influences the staffing of the National Theatre or its productions, but certainly the inactivity of the Theatre from 1908 to 1930 can be laid directly at the door of politics. Last year when I was in Greece the cancellation of the annual Classic season at the Theatre of Herodes Atticus in September 1950 was "fully" explained to me by a Government official with the simple statement that "there had been cabinet unrest." Politics entered most violently into the affairs of the Theatre immediately after the country's liberation from enemy occupation in 1944 and during the ensuing Communist uprising when many Greek actors and actresses were forced from the stage on the charge of collaborationism or because of suspected Communist sympathies. It is a tribute to the integrity of the executives of the National Theatre and to the enthusiasm of the people that the Theatre has been able to survive despite such withering political pressures.

Politics is not the only negative influence abroad in Greece. Although the Greeks are intensely patriotic, the average Greek appears to be haunted by what almost amounts to a national inferiority complex. This expresses itself in many ways: French is the language of Greek society; European and American literature is so eagerly read that I know of one case where a contemporary Greek author achieved national recognition only after his works had been translated into English and published in the United States; Greek musicians are given only rare and grudging hearings (I have seen two thirds of an audience leave a concert by the National Symphony Orchestra during the première of a composition by a modern Greek composer); music in the night clubs is limited almost exclusively to South American tangos; a mail-order dress from the United States commands more respect than a well-tailored woman's suit made from Greece's own handsome raw silk. The list is endless, but the attitude can be summed up by saying that the average Greek automatically accepts foreign products and influences as vastly superior to similar ones of local origin. How easily this attitude translates itself into theatre terms can be seen by the lack of balance in the recent repertory of the National Theatre: two productions of plays by modern Greek playwrights; twelve by foreigners; and two Greek classics. Faced

by such frustration a lesser people would despair of artistic creation.

But the National Theatre of Greece is a healthy organism today. This would not be true were it not that the positive forces behind it are overwhelmingly more powerful than the negative ones indicated above. Certainly foremost among these positive forces is the love of acting and histrionics inborn in every Greek. A discussion concerning the correct time of day is an exercise in eloquence and the rhetorics of debate; the directions to the nearest restaurant are given in terms of modern dance; a telephone conversation regarding the price of a train ticket draws heavily upon gymnastics—no wonder that a telephone booth in Athens is three times larger than the largest one here. Drama and “heroics,” color and passion, analysis and mimicry are one with the blood in the modern Greek and to him theatre, in its broadest sense, is as much a part of life as our six o’clock news on the radio or the comics on Sunday.

Besides their histrionic proclivities, the Greeks are highly gregarious. Miles of beaches are left totally deserted while three hundred persons attempt to swim and sun within a hundred-yard stretch. Coffee houses and wine shops are crowded from morning to night, not with drinkers, but with men who talk—and play games—and talk. One of the great fundamental needs of every Greek is a place to meet his fellow Greek: the church, the beach, the *tavernas*, and the theatre all play a part in filling this need. An echo of the communal gathering around the primitive dance circle? Perhaps. Totally non-aesthetic? Certainly! But who can deny that theatres even nearer to us than those of Greece have survived partially on the same flimsy pretext. (“Meet you in the lobby of the Lyric at two, then afterwards we’ll shop a bit.”)

The Greek with his highly developed sense of the dramatic in everyday life has quite naturally come to expect something even more intense from his theatregoing. The National Theatre does not disappoint him. The emotional range of the plays and the acting within them is immense. Dark passages are brooding and Slavic in color, the serious passages betray the eastern Mediterranean’s insistence upon heroic speech and declamatory fireworks, and the light passages are filled to the brim with an effer-

vescent, and frequently bawdy, high humor which can only be described as "typically Greek." I doubt that Greek acting will ever be popular on this side of the Atlantic for it is too grand, too heroic, for American taste that seems to tend toward the intimate and personal in the theatre. A scholar of the art of acting would surely find the work of Katina Paxinou very much to the point. While she is viewed as a great artist on these shores by serious students of the theatre, she is accorded no widespread popular acclaim; in Greece she is idolized as one of the best of the modern Greek actresses. The passion and humanity and control of her Mrs. Alving in the National Theatre's 1950 production of *Ghosts* seemed to me to be a closer approach to Ibsen's ideal than any of the tepid Mrs. Alvings who have moped upon our local boards. The National Theatre offers a thrilling experience to those foreigners who seek the fullest measure of shading and who enjoy a "theatrical" theatre with a compelling aesthetic distance dividing—and binding—the audience and the actor.

Although the National Theatre may have little in the line of acting acceptable to the American audience, it does have many rich gifts to offer which should not be overlooked. First, it gives us a blueprint of a vigorously functioning national theatre. Second, the student will find there a living repository of acting techniques with unique opportunities for individual virtuosity, yet incorporating invaluable ensemble acting. Third (and I deeply regret that space does not allow for a more detailed handling of this point), the National Theatre of Greece presents a colorful and, at times, almost violent approach to scenic design that only the eastern Mediterranean heart could produce. (Why do we never see reproductions of the designs of Alexis Solomos; why has nothing appeared here about Charles Coon's exciting and exotic handling of the setting for *Henry IV*?) Finally, the Theatre's archives contain a vast manuscript library of promptbooks recording in intimate detail the *régisseurs'* handling of the Greek tragedians, Shakespeare, Ibsen, and a host of other dramatists whose works are now considered classics. I cherish the dream that someday these promptbooks will be made available in published form and in English translation, for the Greek spirit that gave birth to the tragic mode is still among the best interpreters of that mode. What a jewel these volumes would be in our all too small

collection of detailed descriptions of noteworthy productions—and what a rewarding project for the Greek-reading scholar!

And what of the future of the National Theatre of Greece? Barring a large-scale conflict in that area of the world, I would say that the outlook is bright. There is a growing awareness of the folk material in Greece's more recent past. The Benaki Museum, just a step from the Parliament Building in Athens, houses a fabulous collection of historic relics and traditional Greek costumes, jewelry, handicrafts, and furnishing. The growing national interest in the Museum could very easily expand into an interest to write and witness dramas based upon the same national roots. Too, the rising tide of nationalism in the Near East will undoubtedly have a healthy effect upon the appreciation of contemporary Greek creative efforts, and with it the demand for plays of Greek authorship.

A national theatre always reflects the people it serves. The weaknesses of the Greek National Theatre are the weaknesses of the Greeks; the strengths of the Theatre are the strengths of the Greeks. The road before the National Theatre of Greece is as complex and as perilous as the road before Greece, but as long as the Theatre draws its strength from a people as warm, as tolerant, as imaginative, and as expressive as the Greeks, the world theatre may be sure that its able co-worker in Greece will mold a progressive tradition for the future, even as it has in the past.

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# THEATRICAL ENTERPRISE IN AUSTRALIA (1837-1872)

by

AUTREY NELL WILEY

Among the materials I brought back from England in 1933, there was a photostatic copy of an Australian prologue—a rejected one—that I had seen at the British Museum while doing research for my book, *Rare Prologues and Epilogues* (1642-1700).<sup>1</sup> This prologue, not needed at the time, aroused my interest because it was the only colonial piece in the entire collection of separately printed prologues in the libraries of England and Scotland.

Time passed, and, before I could turn my attention to the annotation of *The Rejected Prologue* by W. H.,<sup>2</sup> war clouds were covering Europe, limiting my investigations to these shores. The discovery of the paucity of primary sources relating to the Australian theatre in the United States first astonished me and then challenged me to the investigation out of which evolved this article, which throws light on thirty-five years of theatrical pioneering in Australia.

Before pursuing the subject, I wish to express my thanks to Mr. David Woolley of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra whose assistance from across the Pacific during the War was unceasing and invaluable in bringing to light those things that could only be checked from original sources in Australia.

On November 6, 1873, the second Theatre Royal opened in Melbourne to replace the first that fire had destroyed in March of that year. For the gala opening at least two prologues were written. One by Dr. Nield was accepted and published the following day in the *Age*, together with a full report of the opening night. Although it recalled the fame of Brooke, Rogers, Montgomery, Jefferson, and Mathews, it dwelt mainly upon the status

<sup>1</sup> Published by Allen and Unwin (London 1940).

<sup>2</sup> Published by Clarson, Massina, & Co. (Melbourne 1872).

of the drama and the splendors of the new building. The rejected one by W. H.<sup>3</sup> was published within the month.

In the mood of a spiritualist, *The Rejected Prologue* summons up favorite actors of the 'fifties, 'sixties, and 'seventies, some by direct reference and others in obscure allusion, actors whose careers in the Antipodes are only dimly traceable.

After setting the mood, the *Prologue* first calls forth the brilliant Irish tragedian and exponent of physical acting, Gustavus Vaughan Brooke. Persuaded by the Australian manager, George S. Coppin, to play two years in Australia at £200 a night, Brooke first appeared there as Othello, remaining to invest in Australian theatrical enterprises. He joined Coppin as co-lessee of the Theatre Royal in 1856 and became sole lessee in 1859. His managerial efforts were a failure and he returned to England in 1861. Coppin called him back to Melbourne in 1866, but on the return voyage his ship, the *London*, foundered in the Bay of Biscay, and Brooke, heroically refusing to leave his sister who lay ill in her cabin, went down with the ship. Sailors told of Brooke, in Crimean shirt, bareheaded and barefooted, calling, "Give my farewell to the people of Melbourne."

When news of his death reached Australia, the *Melbourne Punch* of March 22, 1866 published some verses entitled "In Memoriam G. V. B.," including the stanzas:

In him a hundred noble lives went down,  
 Gulf'd in the dark unfathomable deep;  
 With him a hundred gracious creatures sleep,  
 And "Richelieu," "Elmore," and "The Hunchback" drown.

Mute, mute for evermore, the magic tongue  
 Which thrill'd us with "Othello's" sad farewell;  
 While list'ning thousands, subject to its spell,  
 In silent rapture on its accents hung.

On April 19, the "Gallery Boy" in the same paper, mourned his loss:

Next Saterdag, we buoys meen to spend 2 bobb a piece at the Princesses;  
 Jest to whey of a might tords a monnymt for pore G. V. Brooke.

<sup>3</sup> W. H. is still unidentified. Among the several suggestions, the most acceptable candidate for these initials is William Howitt (1792-1879), who went to Australia in 1852. He wrote books on Australia—*Colonization and Christianity* (1838), *A Boy's Adventures in the Wilds of Australia* (1854), *Land, Labour, and Gold* (1855), etc.—and poetry along with numerous minor works not as yet described by bibliographers. Howitt also contributed about one hundred articles on spiritualism to journals,



He was a hackter, he was. Eye think eye sea hymn now—philling the stage with is grand and staitly pressince—wawkin and tawkin like a king of men—dwarfin evry boddi round hymn by the greatness of his jeenyus—konsentraytin evry high on is—fassinaytin evry hear, and maykin two or three thousand people pheel like wun man.

On May 7, the oldest amateur club, the Garrick, gave a memorial performance, assisted by William Hoskins, with a prologue written by James Smith and spoken by Miss Cleveland, and a Threnodia sung by four voices.<sup>4</sup> Members of the Press, assisted by professionals, also acted for the Brooke Memorial Fund. Edwards delivered a prologue by P. F. G. Barry; Mrs. Lewis an epilogue by Dr. Nield; an address by James Smith was spoken by Charles Bright, surrounded by members of the Press. The *Australian Monthly Magazine* of August 1866 printed the Epilogue containing these prophetic lines:

The Brooke Memorial shall not fail to rise,  
Statue, or fund, or academic prize;  
Or shall it be all three? Come, let us try,  
For Brooke's great name with us must never die!

In 1866, also, was published John A. Heraud's lyrical ballad, "The Wreck of the London," in aid of the fund for building a lifeboat to be called the *G. V. Brooke*.

The other actors and actresses who follow Brooke in the prologue were chiefly Anglo-Americo-Australian players who were warmly remembered, some after brief engagements, others after long acquaintance through their having joined stock companies and thereby identified themselves with the Australian theatre. They were not the earliest pioneers, but stars or lesser stars who had sought wider fields for their histrionic talent in the wake of the gold rush. Italics in the text identify them.

### *The Rejected Prologue*

All hail to you assembled here this night;  
A worthy gathering round a scene so bright.  
Since all are come to see our Phoenix rise

<sup>4</sup> The words of the Threnodia are by R. H. Horne and the music by Summers. It was published in the *Australian Monthly Magazine* of June 1866, p. 316.

From ashy bed, and mount towards the skies.  
 Brought low of late—after long years of flight,  
 Wherein her fame was raised to no mean height—  
 With brighter plumes, behold her now appear  
 As truly Royal as the old house, dear  
 To memories past that shall not quickly fade,  
 But rather come (as now) etherialized, to aid  
 And speed propitious on the road to Fame,  
 This youthful bearer of her ancient name!  
 But ere the curtain rises on this eve,  
 'Twere only fitting the poor player should give  
 His audience a moment's leisure to retrace  
 With Memory's footsteps, many a form and face  
 Once so familiar on our Royal stage,  
 And now enrolled on Fame's historic page.  
 Behold we then! as if in visionary trance,  
 From unknown land a shadowy troop advance—  
 Returned once more to greet our fancy's gaze,  
 'Midst the cold haunts still echoing their praise.

Who leads their Company with sadly thoughtful face?  
 Each step he takes full of heroic grace,  
 'Tis thou, *Gustavus*! who in days of yore  
 Did walk these boards, incarnate in the Moor;  
 So like Othello, that it was hard to deem  
 Thou wert not he, or we not in a dream!  
 As such, who saw thee still remember well,  
 And o'er each look and gesture fondly dwell.  
 Yet all thy former triumphs pale before the last,—  
 That greatest tragedy wherein thy lot was ever cast—  
 What thou didst show to audience seated high,  
 That Brooke could only as a hero die!  
 Next thou, though absent, unforgotten *Younge*!  
 Known as Iago of the wily tongue,  
 That with malicious industry did pour

*Gustavus* Vaughan Brooke (1818-1866), born in Dublin and well known in Dublin and London for his Shakespearean roles.

*Younge*, Richard, a colonial favorite, came to Melbourne with Coppin in 1855.

Its subtle poison o'er the jealous Moor.  
 Another shade now passes o'er the scene,  
 Too early lost to us—thou, fair *Mortyn*!  
 Graceful as gifted, long remembered be,  
 While each true heart enshrines thy memory!  
 Here, 'midst the group, methinks I see a *Don*!  
 So once distinguished whilst our stage upon;  
 And, certes, we may scarcely hope to see  
 Another Queen Elizabeth so high as thee!  
 And who is this, whose genial, gay old age  
 So many years shed lustre o'er our stage?  
*Lambert*! thou kind papa, or uncle, of the fair,  
 Called in at last to bless the happy pair,  
 Who, erstwhile truant, now before thee knelt,  
 Received forgiveness, and repentance felt;  
 With thee appears once more the well-known face  
 Of *him* who lately oftentimes filled thy place,  
 Whose native talent won honour for his name,  
 And takes its place upon the scroll of Fame.  
 And thou, the *Star* that shone with radiant light  
 In both the spheres, then hid thyself in night,

*Mortyn*, Mrs. Ellen (d. 1859), also from Dublin, made her debut at Melbourne with Tom Taylor's *Unequal Match* in August 1858. Dr. Alan Downer of Princeton University supplied this information from material in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

*Don*, Sir William Don, Bart. (1825-1862) played female characters in burlesques at the Theatre Royal, Melbourne, and died in Hobart Town, while playing Elizabeth in *Kenilworth*.

*Lambert*, J. C., whose portrayal of genial and gay old age was unequaled during his forty years on the English, American, and Australian stages, ended his association with the Theatre Royal in 1865 and took his farewell to the stage at the Princess's, Melbourne, on May 23, 1866.

*him*, G. H., or "Daddy" Rogers (died before 1880), who was also praised for his portrayal of old men. Rogers never acted out of the Australian colonies.

*Star*, Walter Montgomery (1827-1871), went to Australia in 1866 where his Hamlet won praise. The Duke of Edinburgh honored him in Sydney on April 6, 1868, by presenting him with a splendid gold ring. He took his own life.

No more shalt thou soliloquise, as Denmark's Royal Dane,  
Nor restless sleep, nor troubled dream invade thy silent brain!

These, and some others, whom memory can tell—  
"Life's fitful fever o'er," we trust, "sleep well"—

Having once more appear'd at our behest

From spirit-land, again return to rest.

Yet I've a word, ere ending this address,

For those whom—absent—we would fain express

Our kind remembrance, hoping still that they

May come again to us some future day:

The ladies first, of course! Thee, *Desdemona*, Fair!

O'er whom was dropt our ill-concealed tear;

And thou, whose sprightliness could never rest,

The ever youthful, fairy-like *Celeste*!

Just here, I'll mention her, our hearts who won,

As Dudley—Leicester's Earl—You take me? *Lady Don*:

And her in whom our faith remains unshaken,

Though known to fame as "*Leah, the Forsaken*!"

Nor must I, from this list of ladies fair, omit

Our old friend, *Mrs. Phillips*, since you all admit

That she, as "First Old Lady," in times past,

Hath lent a grace to many a varied "cast."

To these fair dames all honour duly paid,

I pass to him whom all will wish had staid.

*Desdemona*. Mrs. Charles Kean (Ellen Tree [1806-1880]), remembered for her *Desdemona*, made her debut in Melbourne with her husband on October 10, 1863. She closed a highly successful engagement on July 4, 1864, having saved Mr. Coppin from bankruptcy.

*Celeste*, Celine (1814-1882), made her debut at the Haymarket, Melbourne on December 5, 1867, in the role of Miami in *The Green Bushes*.

*Lady Don*. (Emily Saunders [d. 1875]), widow of Sir William, played Leicester in *Kenilworth* and enjoyed marked success at the Haymarket, Melbourne, as well as at theatres in Ballarat and Sydney in 1865-1866.

*Leah, the Forsaken*, Mrs. G. V. Brooke (Avonia Jones [1839-1867]), daughter of an American actress, Mrs. George Jones.

*Mrs. Phillips* (Mrs. Alfred Phillips [1822-1876]), dramatist and actress, who played first in Melbourne at the Princess's, then at the Royal with Hoskins as manager. She was known as the "First Old Lady."

Our *Cousin from America*! nor fear that you  
 Will not yield him the praise so justly due.  
 And one more name I'll mention while I'm here,  
 For sake of those who *still believe* Shakespeare;  
 Dwelling with pleasure on those by-gone days,  
 When *Sullivan* revived the "Swan of Avon's plays.  
 Once more towards the comic side to lean,  
 Our favorite friend and "Tutor," *Hoskins* may be seen;  
 Nor many here, each candid mind must feel,  
 Shall pass or equal him in comedy genteel.  
 From comedy genteel to that called "low,"  
 Is but a step, as all art-critics know,  
 And we've a low comedian, who stands high  
 In public fancy—"the Artful Dodger," alias "*Paul Pry*."  
 Now—I must stop, yet really can't refrain  
 From mentioning one, whom all would see again,  
 I mean *young Mathews*, *Charlie* ever green,  
 Though last, not least was he, amongst those seen;  
 To cross long seas and visit Austral's Isle,

*Cousin from America*, Joseph Jefferson (1829-1905), remembered for his Asa Trenchard in Tom Taylor's *The American Cousin*. He arrived in Australia on November 6, 1861, and spent four prosperous years there.

*Sullivan*, Barry (1821-1891), took his Shakespeare revivals to Australia in 1863 and remained there until 1866 as manager of the Royal in Melbourne.

*Hoskins*, William (1816-1886), went to Melbourne in 1859. He became lessee of the Haymarket in 1865 and manager of the Royal in 1866, retiring in 1884. He was unequaled in genteel comedy, and he got his nickname from his role in *The Irish Tutor*.

*Paul Pry*, George S. Coppin (1819-1906), was Australia's leading theatrical figure for sixty-three years. Besides being a manager, he played low comedy roles, his best remembered part being Paul Pry. A playbill in the Harvard Theatre Collection advertises Coppin's *Paul Pry* at the Prince of Wales Opera House in Sydney in 1869.

*Charlie*, Charles James Mathews (1803-1878), with his second wife (Lizzie Weston Davenport [d. 1899], American actress), arrived in Melbourne on April 9, 1870. He made his first appearance at the Royal in *Patter versus Clatter* and *Married for Money*. He remained there until 1871, winning applause especially in *Cool as a Cucumber*, *The Game of Speculation*, and *Out of Sight Out of Mind*.

To charm dull care and make e'en stoics smile.  
 'Midst winds so hot, when may we hope to see,  
 Or raise a "Cucumber," so "cool" as thee?  
 Tho' fools are left, where shall we find a Fool  
 To equal thee in Mister Gatherwood?  
 Or where a Surface in the "School for Scandal,"  
 To aid digestion in the hour post-prandial;  
 Where find, 'midst all our "Company" formation,  
 Thy match to play "The Game of Speculation"  
 Come back, then, Charley, to us once again!  
 The Gods engage, ye shall not come in vain.

So ends my speech! on this auspicious night  
 While travelling back with you o'er memories bright;  
 Thus paid, our grateful tribute to the Past—  
 The Present claims us now, for Time goes fast.  
 Behold, then! as the curtain upward flies,  
 Your humble servants waiting for the prize  
 Which you alone can *give*, and we regard—  
*Your* kind approval, *our* best reward.

—*Reprinted by the courtesy of the British Museum.*

Many players of the 'thirties and 'forties were not recalled in *The Rejected Prologue*. For these we have to go to the early playbills and first newspapers. At the time, Sydney, Melbourne, and Hobart Town each had a Theatre Royal, Adelaide a new theatre erected "after the plan of the Parisian minor theatre,"<sup>5</sup> and Launceston its Royal Olympic from which the Harvard Theatre Collection derives its earliest Australian playbill, *The Shade* and *The Happy Man*, dated May 2, 1842. By 1846, Sydney and Hobart Town each had a Royal Victoria Theatre in which numerous foreign actors appeared.

Needless to say, the greatest boon to the growth of the theatre in the Antipodes was the arrival, on March 10, 1843, of the almost legendary theatrical speculator, George S. Coppin. He soon built or gained control of a number of theatres. One of these was the

<sup>5</sup> *The Colonial Gazette*, December 1, 1838.

Port Adelaide Theatre, which is pictured in a woodcut of 1851. It was a substantial, two-story building, which also housed a Masonic hall and Coppin's White Horse Cellar, a "pub" in early nineteenth-century England's sense of the word. Beneath the woodcut is this commentary:

The erection of the above splendid pile of buildings must be a heavy blow to those sanguine speculators who fondly hoped to extinguish the present Port, by an imaginary "wet dock" at the North Arm. Notwithstanding the pious anathema of Mr. Giles, we trust that Port Adelaide will long enjoy a "Theatre;" and after his very Christian avowal that he would discharge any man of *his* (that is, the Company's), who should assist in extinguishing a conflagration *there*, he must not be surprised, if it take fire, that his *burning* zeal points him out as the probable incendiary. Since this memorable declaration, such a quantity of *asbestos* has been used in the fittings as to secure the edifice against ordinary casualties of that nature, and the Port Adelaide Theatre will long stand a monument of the enterprise of its projector, and of the intolerance of Mr. William Giles, Manager of the South Australian Company, whose zeal in the interests of the Port is evinced by his constant endeavours to extend its limits in a contrary direction to that in which the bulk of the present business and population is located.<sup>6</sup>

The "pious" Mr. Giles may have been as much alarmed over the prospective popularity of Coppin's Cellar as over the new theatre.

Coppin's theatrical activities as well as those of other men were affected, of course, by the increasing prosperity of the new country. In the 'forties, many Englishmen opposed emigration as "a Tory remedy for national distress" and a design "to please the lairds."<sup>7</sup> But after the opening of the gold fields in 1851, the objections fell on deaf ears, and people flocked to Australia from all parts of the world, not heeding the warning in a Melbourne newspaper:

Better bear the ills they have,  
Than fly to others that they know not of . . .<sup>8</sup>

However, the rumor that in Australia men lighted their pipes with five-pound notes, and the saying, "Now is the time for poor men to be independent of masters," urged many on to Australian diggings. Theatres sprang up; actors came in great numbers, lured

<sup>6</sup> "Views in Adelaide," *Mercury, or South American Sporting Chronicle*, March 22, 1851, p. 833. Copy in the Huntington Library.

<sup>7</sup> *The Emigration Gazette*, January 15, 1842, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted from a Melbourne paper in *The Gleaner* (Northumberland, Kent, Gloucester Commercial and Agricultural Journal) XII (June 13, 1853), 190.

by Coppin, gold, and later by the words with which Charles Mathews bade farewell to Australia in 1871: a place where "perfect pleasure combined with plenty of profit."<sup>9</sup>

The 'fifties and 'sixties saw much theatrical touring, anticipated by Coppin's announcement in 1852 that he had in Melbourne a theatrical agent to handle Australian engagements. In addition to the playhouses already mentioned, there were the Queen's; the Olympic, a galvanized iron structure made for Coppin in Birmingham and called "Coppin's Iron Pot"; the new Theatre Royal, where the first grand opera season in Australia opened; the Pantheon; the Haymarket; and the Princess's.

It was in the 'fifties that Coppin engaged several of the actors mentioned in *The Rejected Prologue*. Many others came: in 1851 Joseph Andrews Rowe from California with his equestrian show Master Rafael, Burke with his clown, George Moore; in 1854 Anna Maria Quinn, a child of seven, sponsored by the actor, Vinson, Laura Keane and Edwin Booth, who returned to America in 1855 with reports of fresh opportunities in Australia; in 1855, the notorious Lola Montez, with a company of nine, who would return the following summer with a talking Australian cockatoo on her shoulder; in 1856, Catherine Norton Sinclair with Henry Sedley and the Gougenheim sisters; and before 1859, John Maguire, the Irish actor, and his company.

In the 'sixties arrived: Sir William Don, who took a company to Hobart Town in 1861; Barry Sullivan, Shakespearean producer, who managed the Theatre Royal, Melbourne from 1863 to 1866; and numerous others from the United States, England, Ireland, Scotland, and France. Although there were always a few native-born players, the theatrical enterprise was never local. Nearly all were actors who had toured or who were touring, and on only the eve of the period of world tours they already inspired such satiric references to their ventures as the one in the *Melbourne Punch* of July 29, 1869:

Actors.—All start at once to England or America. At either place you will secure full salaries, and not be bothered by critics. Hitch on horses to the stage of the Royal, and go without delay. If you have soaring ambition, seize the wings of the theatre and fly away. If a star, then take a place in Charles's wain, or secure the good offices of a travelling comet.

<sup>9</sup> London *Times*, February 24, 1871.



Managers, Englishmen and English bred, found the Australian theatre fertile ground for their expanding interests. This, perforce, preserved the unity of the Old World culture and delayed the new. Shakespeare's plays, enjoyed in the 'thirties through the interpretation of a certain Mr. Spencer, were frequently acted in the 'fifties and 'sixties by Brooke, Sullivan, Younge, Montgomery, James Anderson, and the Keans. The *Melbourne Punch* kept Shakespeare before the public in jest, cartoons, "Shakespeareanisms," stories retold from Shakespeare and entitled "The Comic Shakespeare," humorous debates regarding the madness of Hamlet, pen sketches of actors who played Shakespearean roles, satires of local politicians in scenes from the plays, and some serious critical reviews. There were those, of course, who did not want Hamlet. Two years before Sullivan brought his Shakespearean revivals to Australia, a Sydney manager told Joseph Jefferson: "The legitimate would ventilate my theatre from the first night; and as for that dismal guy 'Amlet, I wouldn't 'ave 'im at no price."<sup>10</sup>

Besides Shakespeare, there were the leavings of London's plays and its latest novelties and sensations. Critics looked to England for guidance while Australian writers and actors first had to make their names there. Even the Shakespeare Memorial Committee of Melbourne placed the selection of a design for the Memorial in the hands of a Committee of Taste, guided by Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin. In 1860, the London *Athenaeum* commented:

The day for a native literature has scarcely come in Australia;—though the papers report a successful production on the Melbourne stage of Mr. Horne's dramatic fragment, "The Death of Marlowe"—a piece which could have had no success on the London Boards.<sup>11</sup>

Notwithstanding, the indigenous, vigorous, self-reliant culture of the people had begun to express itself. R. H. Horne continued to write dramas, among which were *Prometheus* (1864), *Laura Dibalzo* (1880), *King Nihil's Round Table* (1881), and *Bible Tragedies* (1881). The *Australian Monthly Magazine* showed confidence in Australian taste.<sup>12</sup> The Dramatic Authors' Association was active, with Coppin as Australian agent.<sup>13</sup> Movements

<sup>10</sup> *The Autobiography of Joseph Jefferson* (New York 1889), p. 236.

<sup>11</sup> *The Athenaeum*, October 20, 1860, p. 579.

<sup>12</sup> *Australian Monthly Magazine*, December 1865, p. 314.

<sup>13</sup> "Native Talent," *Melbourne Punch*, February 8, 1866.

for the "protection of native industry" encouraged Australian poetry, fiction, and drama, and the *Melbourne Punch* came out for supporting native talents with subsidizing stimuli.<sup>14</sup> In 1869, upon Manager Harwood's arrival from England where he had gone to replenish his Theatre Royal, the same paper commented:

We should always depend upon ourselves. Harwood goes home to bring out "talent," and finds that our own dramatic company is better than any to be engaged in London. We do not want foreign talent after all. . . . If we neglect our own resources, we may go farther and fare worse.<sup>15</sup>

Three years later, upon Harwood's return from another such journey, he, himself, praised Melbourne's new Theatre Royal, saying that it surpassed the Putney Temple of the Muses, La Scala, the Odeon, and Niblo's. "And as for Coppin," he added, "may he live long and prosper."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, within thirty-five years, the colonial audiences desired to put their roots down into their native soil, while dramatic art from the Old World came to them for more room and profit than could be found in England and America alone. The pleasure that the touring players brought to Australia is suggested by the reveries in *The Rejected Prologue* of 1872. It stands on the side of the old culture, closing a period of immigrant activity and English influence.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, July 26, 1866.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, August 12, 1869.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, December 26, 1872. Harwood was quoting from Jefferson's famed toast in *Rip Van Winkle*.

# A FORGOTTEN THEATRE: THE EAGLE VARIETY HOUSE

by

WILLIAM CRANE

Sitting in his chair at the junction of Sixth Avenue and Broadway, New York City, Horace Greeley in 1875 watched the building of one of the most "modern" theatres: The Eagle Variety House. Since then many changes have taken place. The elevated railway has come and gone, streamline buses have replaced the horsecars and trolleys, Macy's in 1901 and Gimbel's in 1906 have revolutionized the whole Greeley and Herald Square areas, yet there still remains the thoughtful seated statue of old Horace Greeley with his memories of a host of immortal names in the history of the theatre which, between 1875 and 1906, drew crowds of playgoers to the southwest corner of Sixth Avenue and Thirty-third Street.

The Eagle Variety House, later known as the Standard and Manhattan, was built by Josh Hart and ex-Judge Dowling to cater to uptown theatregoers as the Comique was catering to those around Ann Street and the Bowery. Contemporary opinion claimed that the new house was the last word in theatre construction and decoration. Perhaps because of this prestige the thoroughfare in front of the theatre was called Broadway rather than Sixth Avenue by permission of the City authorities.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hart may have had an intuition of the impending Sixth Avenue Elevated Railway and with true showmanship felt that a Broadway number would make for better publicity. At all events, the Eagle was greeted with columns of enthusiasm. From its 100-by 40-foot stage, through the imitation satin drop curtain with a medallion of the Home of Washington, to its 1,500 seats surrounded by enormous mirrors, and on through the lobby to the rococo façade surmounted by a huge golden eagle, it was deemed

<sup>1</sup> See *Theatre Magazine*, July 1902.

to be well worth the \$175,000 lavished upon it. The *Evening Post* of October 2, 1875 had this to say of the lobby:

There are two broad stairways of black walnut. The floor is tiled with colored marble and the sides are covered with embossed glass. The ceiling is richly frescoed, its prevailing colors being blue and white. The vestibule is lighted by three crystal chandeliers hanging from the ceiling and two stationary pedestals with globes and burners, which take the place of newel posts at the foot of the grand staircase.

It is amusing to note that, in spite of all the thought given to the Eagle's construction and decoration, no attention had been paid to proper sewerage facilities, and another house on Thirty-third Street had to be bought to take care of this oversight.

Under Josh Hart's management the Eagle presented no very distinguished casts or plays, although it averaged thirty shows a year. Shakespeare and William (Buffalo Bill) Cody appeared from time to time sandwiched in between magicians and vocalists. In 1878 William Henderson took over the management and changed the name to the Standard, deglamouring the interior by covering the mirrors that had caused such a sensation when the theatre was new.

After opening on February 20, 1878 with a not-too-good production of Leonard Grover's *Our Boarding House*, which had been done far better at the Park Theatre by Stuart Robson and William Henry Crane, Henderson began ingratiating himself with the general public by presenting Maggie Mitchell in *Mignon*. Miss Mitchell (Mrs. Paddock) had been popular since her first appearance at the age of five, and at forty-six Mr. Henderson made no mistake in booking her, nor in following her engagement a month later with another popular favorite, J. K. Emmett. It must be admitted that Emmett was no great actor, but he charmed audiences with his characterization of Fritz in Charles Gayler's *Fritz, Our Cousin German*. Fritz was a simple soul who sang "corny" songs that Emmett rendered in a soothing, heart-warming voice. He held the stage from April to June when he succumbed to the bottle and had his nose broken in a fist fight.

Like all managers, Henderson had his vicissitudes. There were some dismal failures, perhaps the most fatal being a strange trilogy, following each other in rapid and somewhat significant succession: *Matrimony*, *Bigamy*, and *Drink*. One brighter spot

was Kate Mayhew's appearance in Bret Harte's *M'liss* in which Annie Pixley was to make her New York debut the next year. The play, however, closed in one week to make room for a production which is a milestone in theatrical history and for which the Standard is justly famous—the first production of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta on this side of the Atlantic.

The play was *H.M.S. Pinafore, or the Lass That Loved a Sailor*. In the Nineteenth Century copyright laws were vague, and a pirated edition of the operetta had reached America in 1878. As it had been published, it could be produced in those days without paying royalties. Mr. Henderson did not miss this opportunity, and on January 15, 1879 *Pinafore* had its première at the Standard. It ran with increasing success until June of that year at a top price of \$1.50. The review in the *New York Times* of January 17, 1879 contained the following comments:

Although the initial performance of Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan's nautical opera bouffe, "H.M.S. Pinafore" last night was, in many respects unsatisfactory, yet the original and delightful merits of the work were indisputable and we have no doubt of its success. . . . the libretto is a gem of its kind written with extreme delicacy and crowded with songs of all descriptions. . . . music . . . in some instances is exceedingly original. . . . Miss Eva Mills sang very sweetly, but acted disgracefully.

In spite of the conservatism of this review, this production will always be remembered as the impetus which started New Yorkers on the merry, satirical Gilbert and Sullivan pilgrimage they have followed with enthusiasm ever since.

Oddly enough, the London company did not fare as well as the American one. The Messrs. Gilbert and Sullivan saw a rich field of their sowing being harvested by strangers, and hastened to this country. It is not surprising that on this visit their activities did not concern the Standard. They produced an authorized version of *Pinafore* at the Fifth Avenue Theatre on December 1, 1879, followed by a surprise production of *The Pirates of Penzance*. They added several road companies, and, confident that they had done all they could to protect themselves from further pirating, they returned to England.

The Standard, whether in a repentant mood or not, presented *Patience* on September 22, 1881, produced officially by the D'Oyly Carte Company, and under the same banner revived

*Pinafore* on May 25, 1882, with several members of the London Opera Comique in the cast. On November 25, 1882, the theatre strengthened its right to be considered the New York home of Gilbert and Sullivan by presenting the first performance of *Iolanthe*, the opening coinciding with the first night in London. *Pinafore* was revived again before the disastrous fire of 1883.

The years from 1878 to 1883, while perhaps most notable for the Gilbert and Sullivan productions, had other high spots. Grau's French Opera Company was seen for the first time in America as well as the D'Oyly Carte and E. E. Rice's Opera Comique in a production of Edward Solomon's *Billee Taylor* (February 19, 1882). There were also productions of Greene and Thompson's *Sharps and Flats*, with the popular team of Robson and Crane, and of the Clifton W. Tayleure adaptation of Mrs. Henry Wood's novel, *East Lynne*. There was another D'Oyly Carte—Parke and Paulton's *Les Manteaux Noirs*—and a production of Planquette's *Rip Van Winkle* in whose cast appeared a certain Richard Mansfield who doubled for two of the singing comedian roles.

The musical play, Walter Parker's *Estrella* with music by Luscombe Searelle, had been running at the Standard for three days when on December 14, 1883 at 6:44 P.M. fire broke out, and, in spite of three alarms, the stage was completely destroyed and a good part of the auditorium. Because of certain mortgage problems, great doubt was expressed that the theatre would be rebuilt, but such is the rugged enthusiasm of theatre people that on December 23, 1884 the New Standard opened its doors. By a curious coincidence the Comique on Ann Street, after which the original Eagle had been patterned, burned down the very day the New Standard opened.

The opening piece was Franz von Suppe's *A Trip to Africa* advertised as having "new scenery and costumes, novel mechanical effects, a chorus of fifty, an increased orchestra and a powerful cast." All this was probably true, but the critics thought little of the "powerful cast" as actors. The New York *Times*' critic said of Miss Marie Conron that "her singing was particularly creditable, and her acting particularly bad." He disposed of all the actors as he had Miss Conron and commented on the finale of the second act:

As beautiful and elaborate a picture as was revealed at the close of the second act when the spectator beheld the moonlit Nile overflowing its banks while a throng of spectators in richest Eastern attire moved to and fro in front of the stage, a mass of glowing color, has never been shown in connection with a representation of light opera comique. The assemblage which was very large applauded the scenery and the singing with genuine heartiness, and bore with patience the tedious conversation and almost equally tedious proceedings making up the so-called play.<sup>2</sup>

Another spectacular play, Alfred Thompson's *The Arabian Nights or Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp*, was presented on September 12, 1887. It moved one critic to say with a quaint confusion of poetry and grammar:

The new spectacular effects, brilliant masks and ballets, gorgeous costumes and scenery, and general glitter and glory, like Banquo's ghost, dazzles the eyeballs.<sup>3</sup>

The following years were active but uneventful. It was the first three years of the Nineties at the Standard that keep it on the pages of theatrical history. On her great world tour (1880-1892), Sarah Bernhardt played there in *La Tosca*, *Frou-Frou*, *Camille*, *Pauline Blanchard*, closing with *La Dame de Challant*. Mme. Bernhardt had had difficulties with her beloved French audiences; she had suffered the death of her former husband; she was past the half-century mark and had lost some of her sprightliness due to a leg injury; but there was still no doubt in the mind of the general public that she was one of the greatest actresses of all time. Critics will be critics, however, and I quote two contemporary comments. The *Times* told its readers:

. . . the actress has never achieved a greater triumph in this country. She is in her golden prime now, and she used all her wealth of resources, all her tragic power, and all her facile and exquisitely finished art in her portrayal of the Comtesse de Challant. . . the fire of genius glowed in her work.<sup>4</sup>

But what paper do you read? A contemporary racing sheet had this to say:

Grandma Bernhardt says farewell to New York—and a good riddance—at the unfortunate "Standard" this week, skipping about in her repertory from "Camille" to "La Dame de Challant," from "Frou-Frou" to "La Tosca"

<sup>2</sup> New York Times, December 24, 1884.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, September 13, 1887.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, December 4, 1891.

with a little of "Pauline Blanchard" thrown in from sheer obstinacy. There must be an end to everything, and the end of Bernhardt in this metropolis has come. Aesthetically, the residents of New York may be fools, but they cannot be fooled more than three times by the same foreign agency.<sup>5</sup>

How disappointed this critic must have been if he was still alive when Bernhardt returned in 1911, and again in 1916, for two more triumphal tours! Perhaps he was envious of the three and one-half million francs the actress netted by "skipping about in her repertory."

Other famous names followed Bernhardt. On October 3, 1892 Mr. John Drew, who for years had been playing under the aegis of Augustin Daly, moved *The Masked Ball* by Alexandre Bisson and Michele Carré and adapted by Clyde Fitch to the New Standard under Mr. Charles Frohman. Drew's leading lady, Maude Adams, appeared here in her first starring role. The one-hundredth performance of *The Masked Ball* took place at the New Standard on December 28, 1892 and was a great theatrical event. Mr. Drew appeared before the curtain to acknowledge the enthusiastic applause and in a short speech thanked his audience and Mr. Frohman.<sup>6</sup> Performances continued until January 21, 1893.

Then on October 2, 1893, more laurels were won by the New Standard, definitely forging a link with the present, by the appearance of Etienne Girardot as Lord Fancourt in *Charley's Aunt*, the perennially popular Brandon Thomas comedy, which in 1948 was given a musical twist with a few extra flourishes by Ray Bolger, the noted Broadway comedian. The Standard production's reviews were strangely mild. While admitting that it was "the best comic play England has sent us in years," the *Times'* critic added that the success of the performance was largely due to the skill of Joseph Humphreys, the stage manager, making no critical mention of the first and greatest of the many Charley's Aunts, Girardot, or any of his playmates, such as, Nanette Comstock and W. J. Ferguson.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, people were turned away from the theatre and the "standing room only" sign was often up before the play closed in April 1894, having reached more than 200 performances.

<sup>5</sup> *The Spirit of the Times*, week of December 12, 1891, p. 800.

<sup>6</sup> For the curtain speech see *New York Times*, December 29, 1892.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, October 3, 1893.



Another "first" at the New Standard was William Gillette's *Too Much Johnson*, which opened on November 26, 1894. It received mild plaudits as a slight but good comedy with the sweeping comment that "anything that Mr. Gillette does is well done."<sup>8</sup>

In the few remaining years of the Nineteenth Century the New Standard was called the Manhattan. The handsomely refitted and redecorated theatre opened on August 30, 1897 with *What Happened to Jones*, a comedy from the prolific pen of George Broadhurst that had had a long run in London. It was, however, not popular here, and the Manhattan had to wait for a "new rustic play," as the headlines had it, to win the favor of its audiences. The play was Lottie Parker's *Way Down East*, produced by William A. Brady and Florenz Ziegfeld, jr., with a cast including Odell Williams, Sara Stevens, Howard Kyle, and Minnie Dupree. Minnie Dupree was to have her first starring role on this stage a few years later. *Way Down East* gave both the gallery and the orchestra a chance to reminisce, a pleasure common to all brackets, and was very well received, one paper noting that there were very few moments of "rhetorical flub-dub."<sup>9</sup>

The Manhattan turned the century with Willie Collier in his own *Mr. Smooth* and Grace George and Rose Coghlan in *Mlle. Fifi*. The Twentieth Century opened with Shirley and Landeck's *Woman and Wine*, F. Hopkinson Smith's *Caleb West*, J. I. C. Clarke's *Her Majesty, the Girl Queen of Nordenmark*, which was adapted from Elizabeth Tompkin's novel, and the comic opera, *Sweet Ann Page*, by de Lange and Smith with music by W. H. Neidlinger. All had better than average runs. Names familiar to not-too-old theatregoers began to make their appearance: Grace George, Granville Barker, Thomas Meighan, Frank Keenan, Anna Held, and Dustin Farnum. On February 4, 1902, Douglas Fairbanks, sr. made his first New York stage appearance in Martha Morton's *Her Lord and Master*, starring Effie Shannon and Herbert Kelcey.

The swan-song period for the Manhattan began in 1901 when Harrison Grey Fiske, an experienced theatre man, leased the theatre and took over the management with his wife, Minnie

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, November 27, 1894.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, February 8, 1898.

Maddern Fiske, as leading lady and stage manager. Never has a swan song been more beautifully sung. Mrs. Fiske, who had been warming the hearts of New Yorkers since her debut at the age of five in Tom Taylor's *A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing*, now at thirty-five was wringing their hearts with her unforgettable portrayals of characters, such as, Hedda, Guilia, Tess, Becky, and a host of others. The critics' praise was unstinted, and the Manhattan became a mecca for those who craved that very sincerity and penetrating understanding of human nature which Mrs. Fiske brought to all her work. She once remarked that "Without him [Mr. Fiske], I should have been obliterated,"<sup>10</sup> but I would paraphrase this remark by saying that without Mrs. Fiske the Manhattan would have been obliterated. It is true that Mr. Fiske brought his wife out of a four-year retirement, but, with or without Mr. Fiske, Minnie Maddern had always been a personality, and by her dual role of leading lady and stage manager her personality shone even through the plays in which she did not appear.

In 1906 Mr. Fiske's lease expired and he moved his activities elsewhere. Material progress was demanding more and more sacrifices, and planners of the Hudson River Tube had their eyes on the ground under the old Eagle Variety House. The Manhattan was to succumb in 1909 to make way for Mr. Gimbel's Department Store, but not without a certain grandeur. During the last three years, Girardot revived *Charley's Aunt* there for 80 performances, Leo Ditrichstein played his own *Before and After* for 77, and Mme. Bertha Kalich in Maeterlinck's *Monna Vanna*, Mrs. Fiske in John Luther Long's *Dolce* and Jacob Gordin's *Kreutzer Sonata* wrote a glorious epilogue to the activities of the old variety house. As a bow to the giant of the Twentieth Century, the Manhattan netted \$1,000 a week as a motion picture house before it finally closed its doors.

<sup>10</sup> Recorded by Alexander Woollcott in *Mrs. Fiske: Her Views on Actors, Acting, and the Problems of Production* (New York 1917), p. 54.

## FOREWORD

to

### The Medieval Pageant Wagons of Louvain

With this issue the *Theatre Annual* reaches its tenth anniversary, an event hardly dreamed of when the first issue was published in May of 1943. The second issue, *Theatre Annual*, 1943, was sent to subscribers early in January of 1944. These were the War years, and in 1944 the late Mr. Ernest Bavely, as president of the National Thespian Drama Honor Society, suggested that copies of the initial issues be sent to our Post Libraries along with other books on the theatre. Needless to say, Mr. Richard Ceough, who died in 1947 but was then at the helm of the *Theatre Annual*, was happy to provide them. In time our circulation increased, and there has been a constant demand for back numbers, especially the long-out-of-print 1943 issue which contained Professor George R. Kernodle's invaluable illustrated article, "The Medieval Pageant Wagons of Louvain." With Professor Kernodle's kind permission, we now reprint his article in its entirety to celebrate our tenth anniversary.

—*The Editors*



# THE MEDIEVAL PAGEANT WAGONS OF LOUVAIN

by

GEORGE R. KERNODLE

What did the medieval pageant wagons look like? Apparently no graphic record of them has come down to us from England where they were extremely popular during the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth Centuries. Fortunately, however, we can look at the pictures of similar pageant wagons built for the dramatic processions in Louvain. In 1594, the town clerk of Louvain, William Boonen, wrote an account of the city's splendid procession of that year and drew some thirty pictures of the characters and the wagons. His manuscript, known as the *Liber Boonen*, remained in the Louvain Library until 1914. When the Germans invaded Belgium, the Library was burned. Yet all of Boonen's work was not lost. In 1863, a small volume had been published reproducing his drawings in lithographs.<sup>1</sup> Although by 1594 the wagons of the traditional procession had been rebuilt with Renaissance and even Baroque decorative details, we may be sure that they still followed the same basic patterns that had been used for at least two centuries before. From these forgotten pictures we can reconstruct the production methods of a whole era of drama.

The great religious processions of the summer season were the pride of the commercial cities of France, Flanders, and England. At this time great fairs and markets were held in the cities for periods of one or two weeks and festivities were organized to attract customers from miles around. For the processions, the trade guilds built elaborate wagon floats to represent stories of Biblical and local history. In Bruges, a procession, still a very important occasion, celebrated the bringing to Bruges of a vial of the Holy Blood, and the display of the relic was the climax of the procession. In York, Coventry, Lincoln, Newcastle, Chester, and dozens of smaller English cities, the procession celebrated

<sup>1</sup> Edward van Even, *L'Omgang de Louvain* (Brussels and Louvain 1863). Copies in British Museum and Harvard College Library.

the Feast of Corpus Christi; and not only an elaborate procession but a whole series of plays, sometimes lasting three days, was presented in this processional manner.<sup>2</sup> In Freiburg and several other German cities, the early scenes of the Corpus Christi procession, from Adam and Eve and the Prophets of Christ through the Nativity and early life of Christ, were shown on wagon stages drawn in procession, but the final scenes, of the Passion and the Resurrection, were developed into full plays and presented before the cathedral at the conclusion of the procession. In the procession were representations of legendary giants and picturesque monsters. The audiences were enthralled, instructed, and entertained by what they saw; and the merchants laid up great credit in Heaven from the procession and great profits in this world from the fairs.

The Louvain Procession of Our Lady, the most popular of all the processions in Belgium, was first presented in 1490 on the birthday of the Virgin, September 8, to celebrate the victory over the invading Northmen in the year 891—a victory attributed to the intervention of the Virgin. In the Sixteenth Century the date was changed to the first Sunday in September and the festival was greatly expanded. The pageant wagons were rebuilt and elaborated; one of the Chambers of Rhetoric produced a play on a platform in the public square at the conclusion of the procession, and the *kermess* and fair were extended to cover the week before as well as the week following the sacred day.

On the eve of the procession, during a service in the cathedral, the miraculous image of the Virgin was brought from Her chapel and placed in the nave. Early the next morning, after Mass, the porters took the image to the square, and Our Lady Herself, escorted by the clergy and the faculty of the University (Pl. 1), led the procession to the music of the city waits.

Like the Corpus Christi processions, the Pageant of Our Lady dramatized the salvation of Man through the coming of Jesus. The first wagon of the procession showed the expulsion of Man from the Garden of Eden (Pl. 2). This wagon presented four symbols of a garden—a fence, a fountain, a gate, and a tree, and above the gate, on a kind of Elizabethan upper stage, an image of God was shown.

<sup>2</sup> M. Lyle Spencer, *Corpus Christi Pageants in England* (New York 1911).

Instead of the usual Old Testament prophecies and prefigurations of Christ, the Louvain procession presented a half-allegorical introduction to Our Lady. First came thirty-four groups of people presenting thirty-four women of the Old Testament, each woman representing one quality possessed by the Virgin (Pl. 3). First, two warrior women; Jael, who killed Sisera with a nail, and the Woman of Thebes who killed Abimelech with a millstone; then, for other qualities of the Virgin, Ruth, Naomi, and the mothers of Samuel and of Samson. These women did not wear the contemporary costume of the Sixteenth Century but variations of an "antique" nymph costume that served equally for goddesses, Botticelli graces, pastoral nymphs, and women of the Bible. Each character, in typical medieval fashion, carried or wore some property as an identifying symbol. Just as each saint was painted with his symbol, so Sisera wore the nail on his head and Abimelech the millstone on his. In other parts of the procession, Jonah and the angel of Tobias each carried a fish in his hand. Besides this, each central character bore a banderole on which was written a motto or characteristic quotation. Only in the case of the mother of Samson does the artist include the banderole in our pictures.

After the Old Testament women came a second allegorical preparation for Our Lady: seven picturesque animals, each built to be carried by a man hidden inside, represented the Vices, each of which was ridden by a lady as a Virtue who, with the help of Our Lady, kept the Vices under control.

Then was shown the coming of Our Lady Herself. Represented by a living actress, She sat on top of the enormous wrought-iron Tree of Jesse (Pl. 4), which supposedly was issuing from the actor representing Jesse and could hold in its flowers thirty living children symbolizing kings and prophets. At the corners of the platform, holding identifying standards, sat the Four Sibyls who predicted the virgin birth of Christ.

The next pageant wagon, the most splendid, depicted the presentation of the Virgin in the Temple (Pl. 5). Doubtless in the earlier processions the tower of the Temple was a tall Gothic spire.

The Annunciation wagon (Pl. 6) was the loveliest. The simple scene was enclosed in the baldachin of four columns supporting a

canopy—a pattern derived from the early altars and shrines.<sup>3</sup> That the form was a popular dramatic one is proven by its repetition on the Resurrection wagon (Pl. 9). Many stages in churches, on platforms, and on wagons, used this form. On both the Annunciation and Resurrection wagons, it was a purely formal architectural frame, given Renaissance detail in the renovations of the 1550's. That it could be combined with more realistic detail is revealed in the pageant wagon of the Nativity (Pl. 8). Even so, the roof was a symbol of the heavens and held an image of God in the center and four angels at the top of the posts.

The pageant wagons of the Pentecost and Assumption of the Virgin (Pls. 10 & 11) indicate that machines were as popular with the moving pageants as with the stationary stages. In one picture we can see the Sacred Flame, usually built of beaten copper or of gilt with a burning torch in the center, let down from the central tower with a rope manipulated by the man walking alongside the wagon. Even more elaborate was the *glory*, the machine for raising or lowering heavenly characters. In the other picture we can see the image of Mary being raised to join the Trinity in Heaven—just as, throughout the period, the image was raised in many churches at Mass on the Feast of the Assumption.

The last pageant wagon completed the story of Man's fall and redemption. A tall tower of four stories (Pl. 12) carried the Nine Choirs of Angels, as an emblem of the paradise in store for Man. A group of historical characters and the great comic giants formed the last group. At the end of the procession, a giant St. Margaret and a giant St. George lorded it over a great comic dragon.

At the conclusion of the Louvain procession, as at Freiburg, Newcastle, and Florence, a play, such as the *Judgment of Solomon*, was put on in the public square<sup>4</sup> by the Chamber of Rhetoric (Pl. 13). The stage, a platform before a formal architectural façade, was similar to the other stages of the Chambers of Rhet-

<sup>3</sup> Neil C. Brooks, *The Sepulchre of Christ in Art and Liturgy, with Special Reference to the Liturgical Drama*, University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, Vol. VII, No. 2 (May 1921).

<sup>4</sup> E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage* (Oxford 1903), II, 134; Oskar Sengspiel, *Die Bedeutung der Prozessionen für das geistliche Spiel des Mittelalters in Deutschland, Germanistische Abhandlungen*, Heft 66 (Breslau 1932).



oric and, of course, to the Elizabethan and Spanish stages.<sup>5</sup> This last is the only one of our pictures that has been altered by the nineteenth-century lithographer. From other prints and pictures of the times, he has drawn in the audience and the buildings around the square. Boonen drew only the stage itself.

Whether with the Renaissance details of the late Sixteenth Century or the Gothic details of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth; whether with the formal baldachin or the realistic houses, caves, or Hell-mouths; whether stopped along the way for whole little plays, as in England, or drawn without pause as on the Continent—these pageant wagons expressed the religious devotion of the people and, at the same time, the pride of the great guilds of the rising commercial cities of Western Europe.

<sup>5</sup> The interrelationship of the different stages of the Sixteenth Century I discuss in *From Art to Theatre: Form and Convention in the Renaissance* (Chicago 1944).



*T H E P L A T E S*



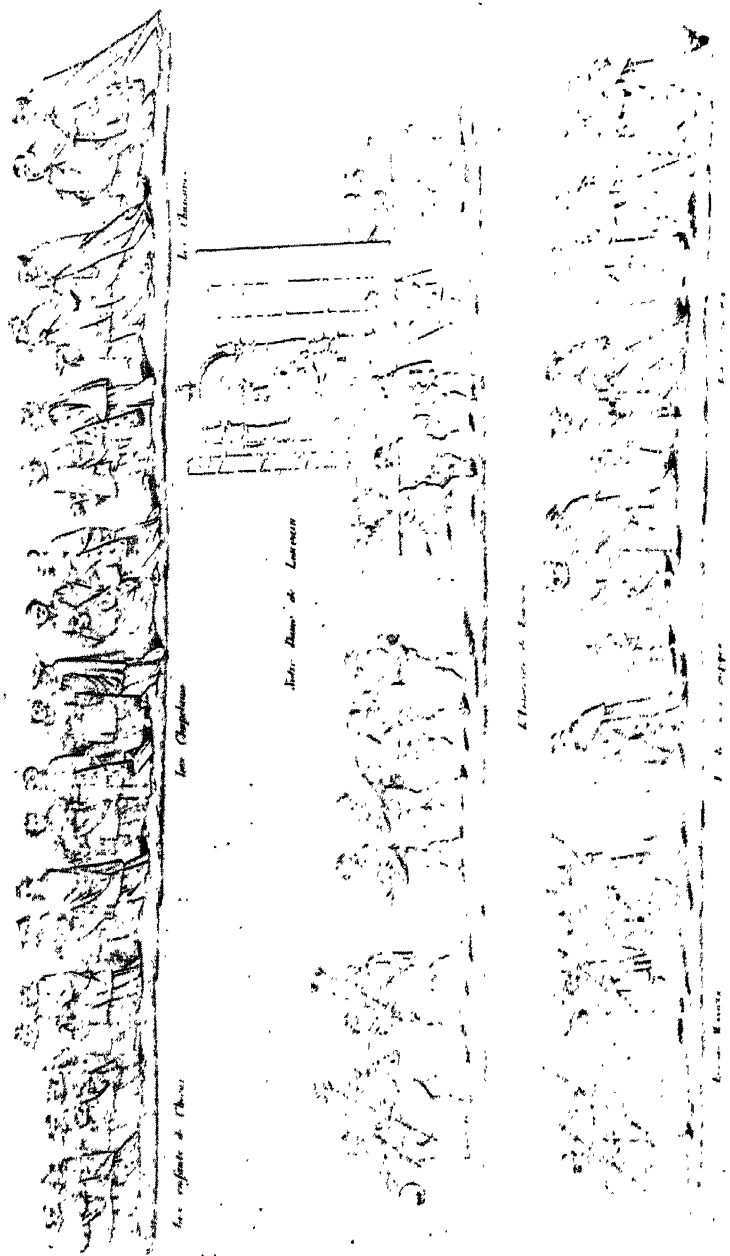
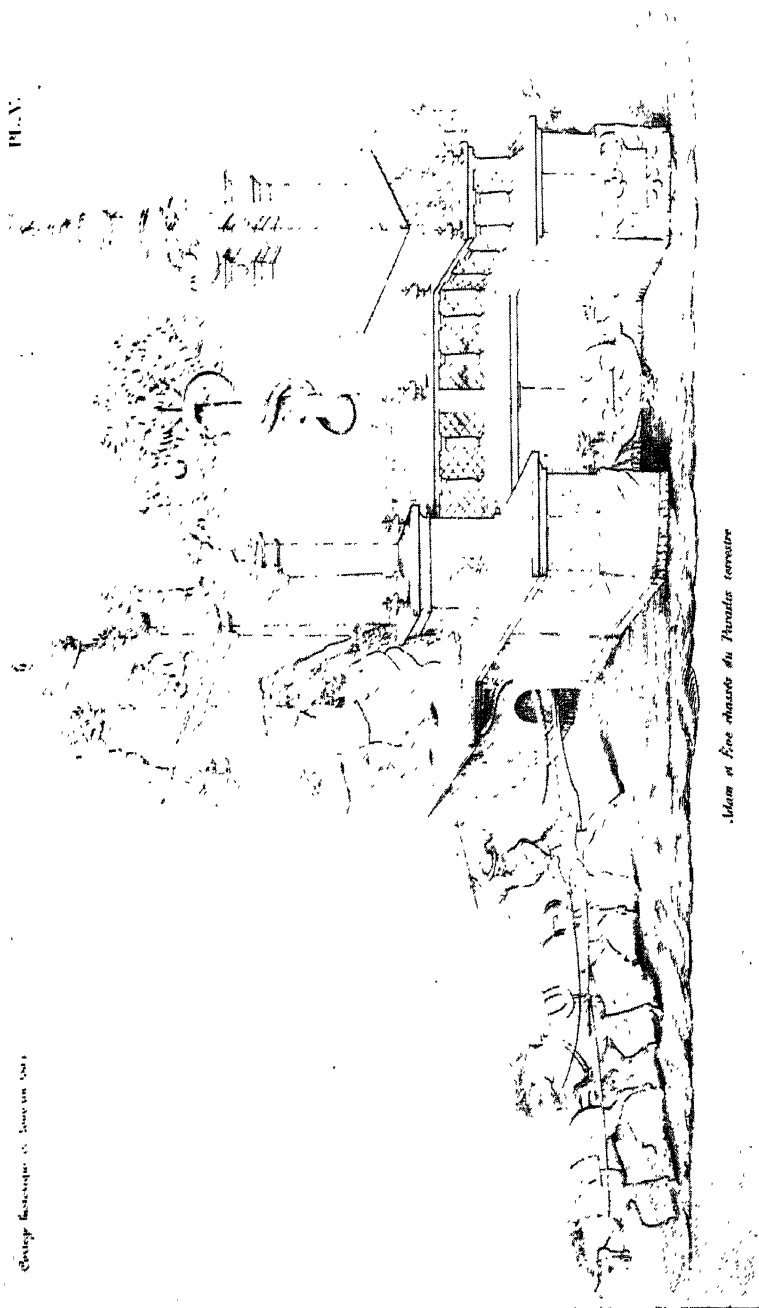


Plate 1. The Beginning of the Procession, led by the Image of Our Lady escorted by the clergy and the faculty of the University to the music of the city veits.



Adam et Eve chassés du Paradis terrestre

Plate 2. The First Pageant Wagon: The Expulsion from Paradise.

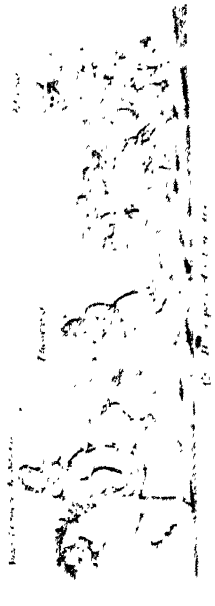
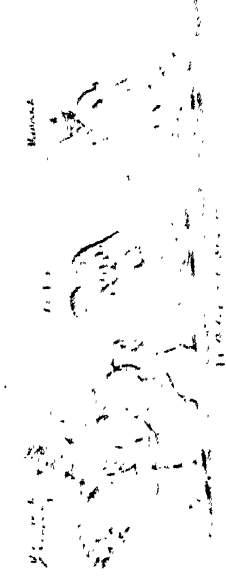
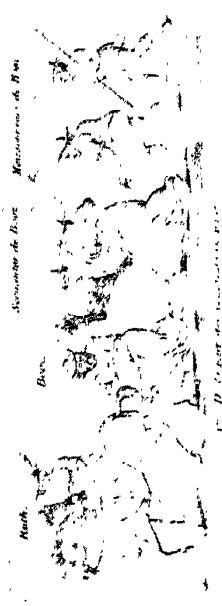
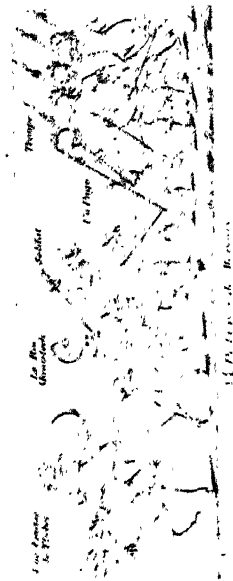
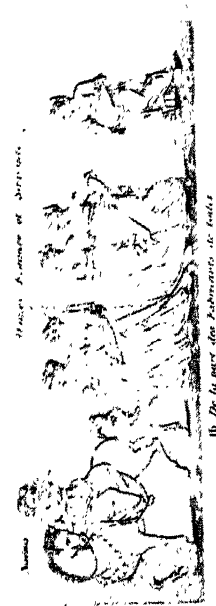
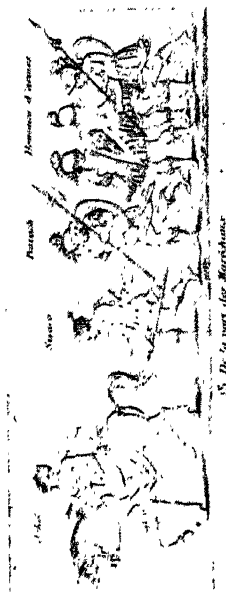


Plate 3. Part of the Series of Thirty-Four Women of the Old Testament: Jael, the Woman of Thebes, Naomi, Ruth, the Mother of Samson, and Anne, the Mother of Samuel.

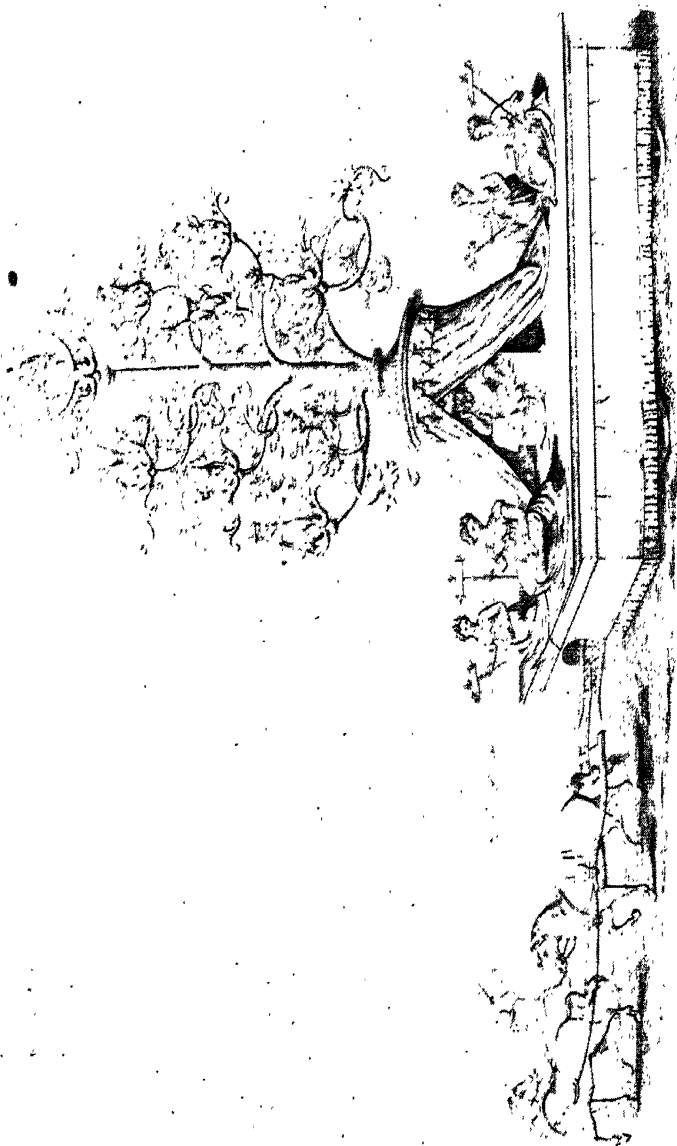
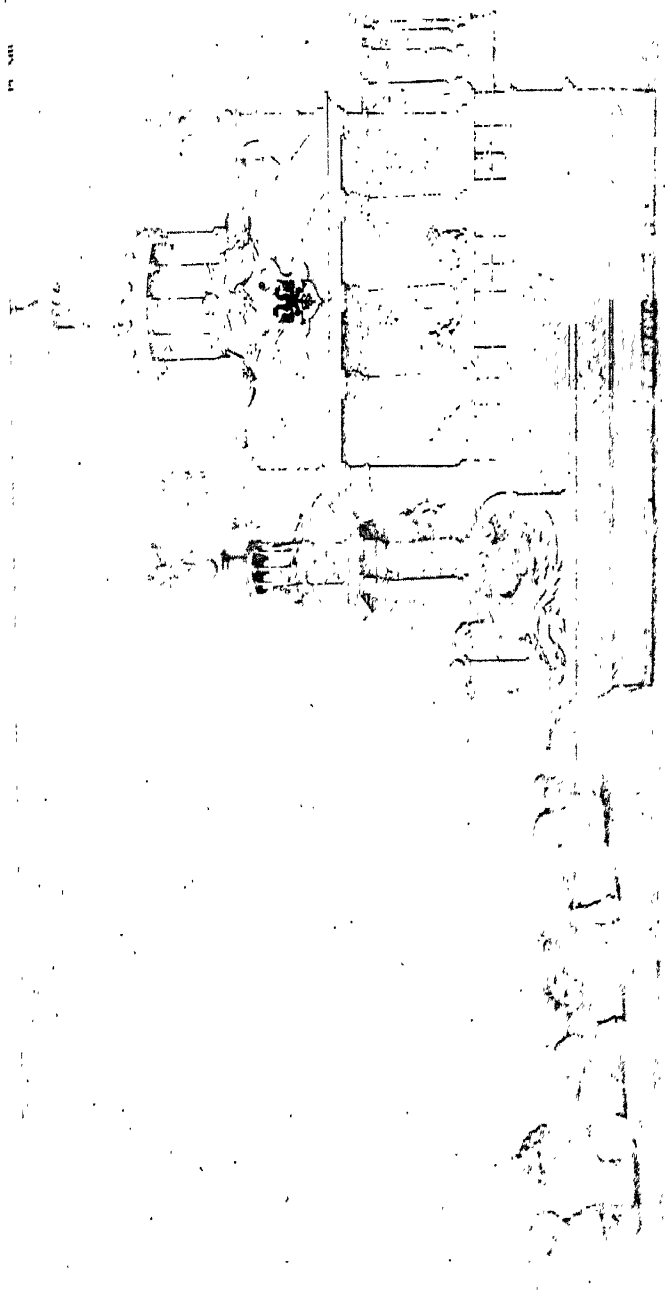


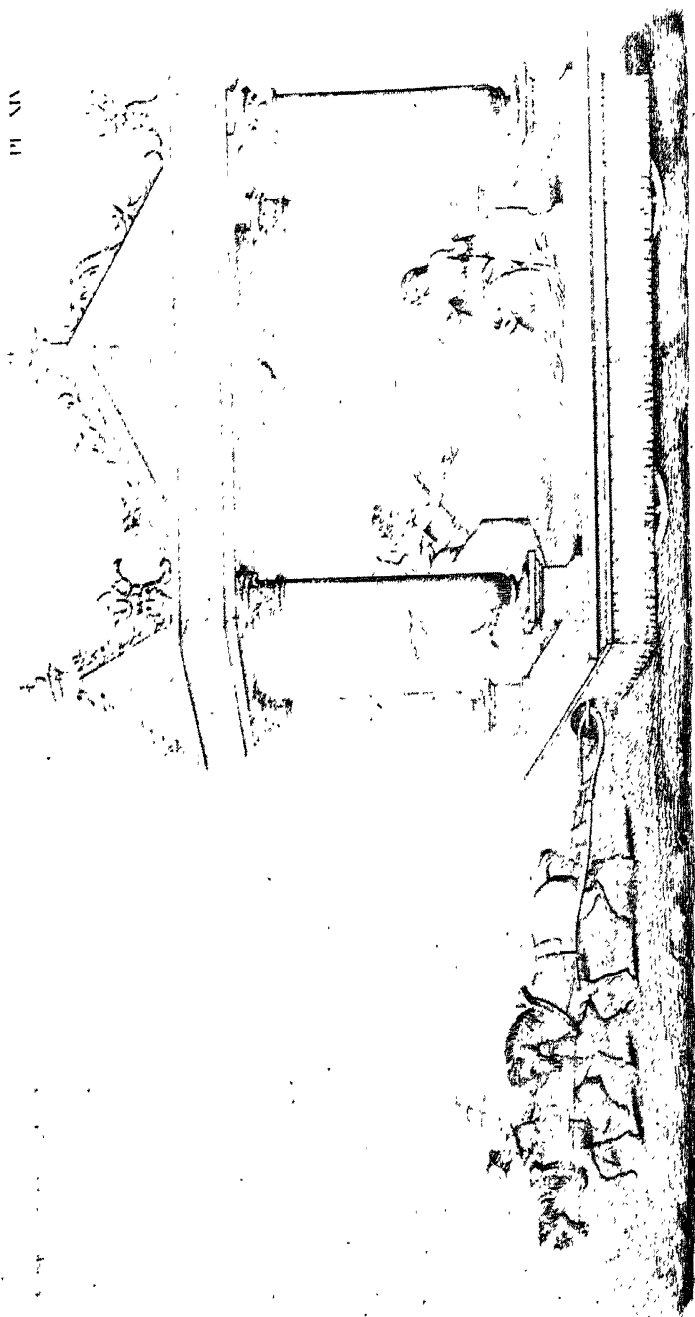
Plate 4. *The Tree of Jesse, with living actors as Jesse, the Kings and Prophets, the Virgin, and Four Sibyls.*





*The Presentation of the Virgin*

Plate 5. *The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple.*



*L. Annunciazione*

Plate 6. *The Annunciation.*



Plate 7. *The Visitation: The Virgin and Elizabeth.*

Photograph by the author, 1901.  
The Nativity of Christ.

PL. XVI

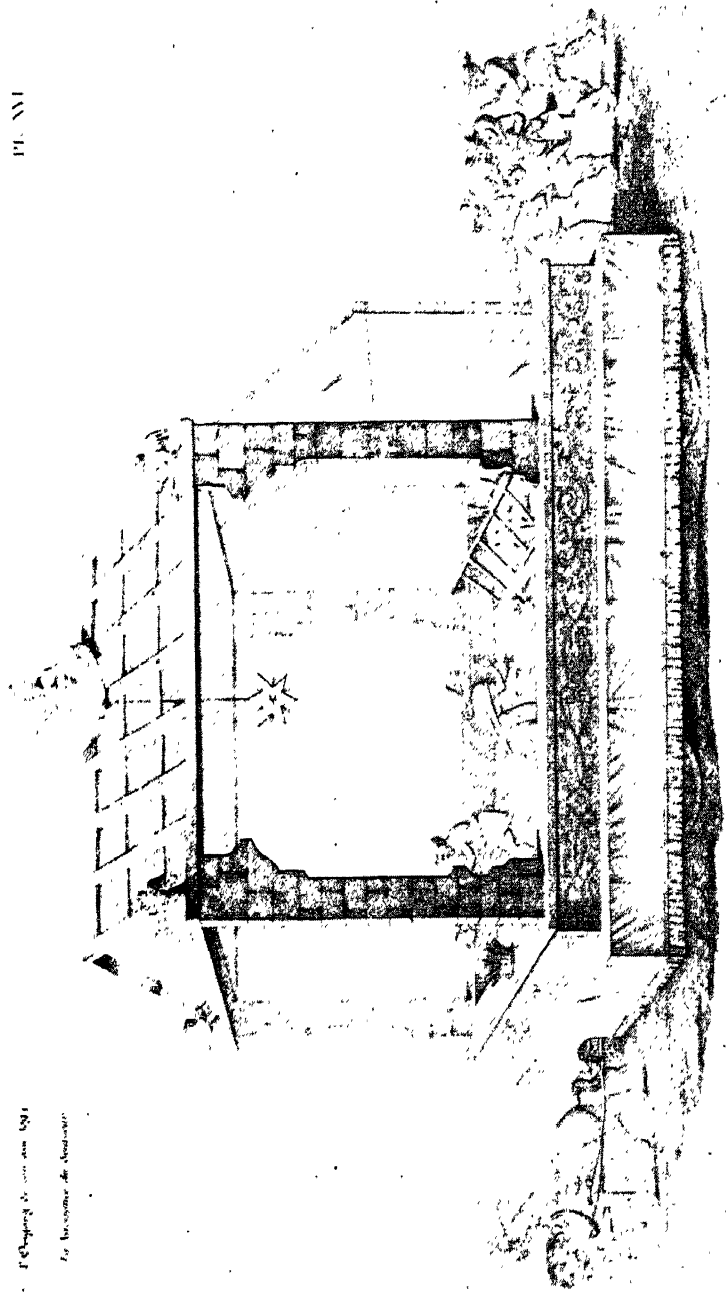
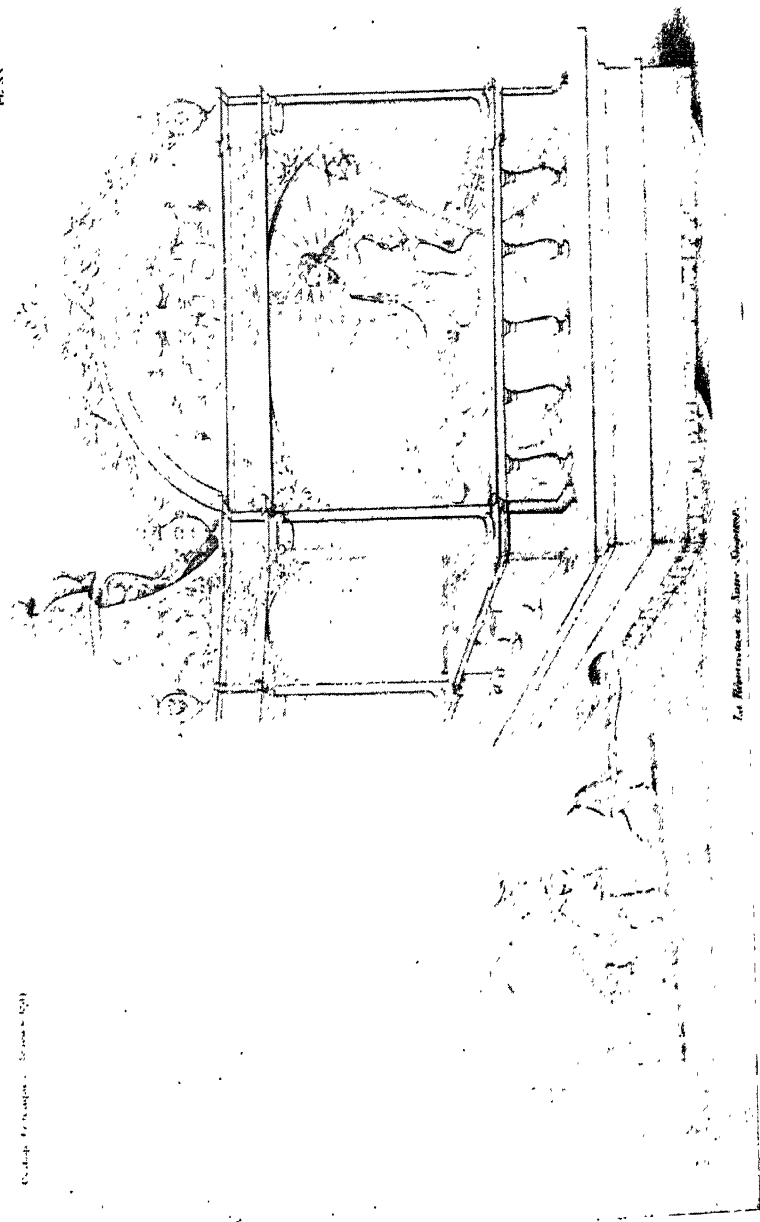


Plate 8. *The Nativity.*



Le Réposoir de Jésus-Christ.

Plate 9. *The Resurrection.*

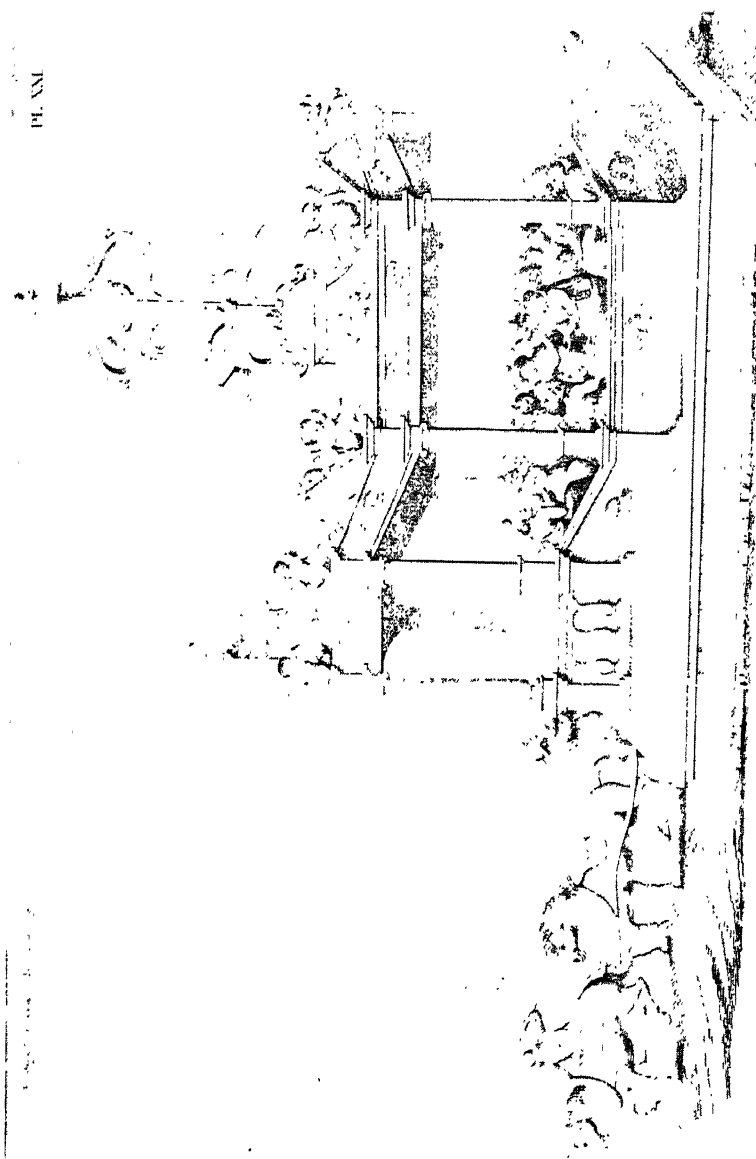


Plate 10. *The Pentecost, with a machine to show the descent of the Holy Spirit.*

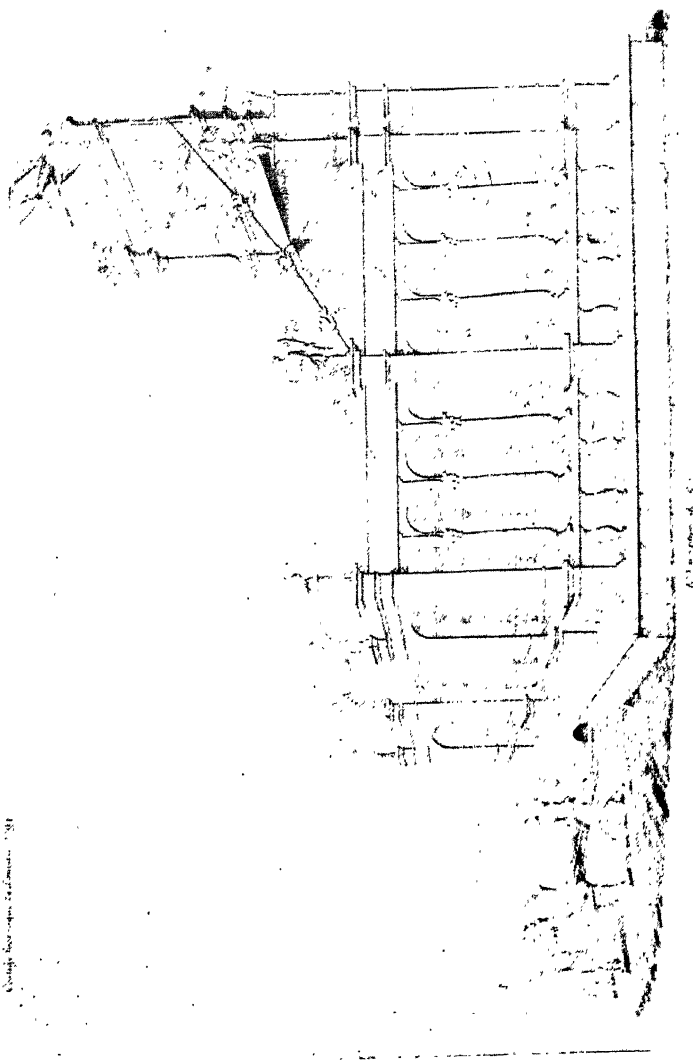


Plate 11. The Assumption of the Virgin: an Image in a "glory" drawn up by ropes to the Trinity above.

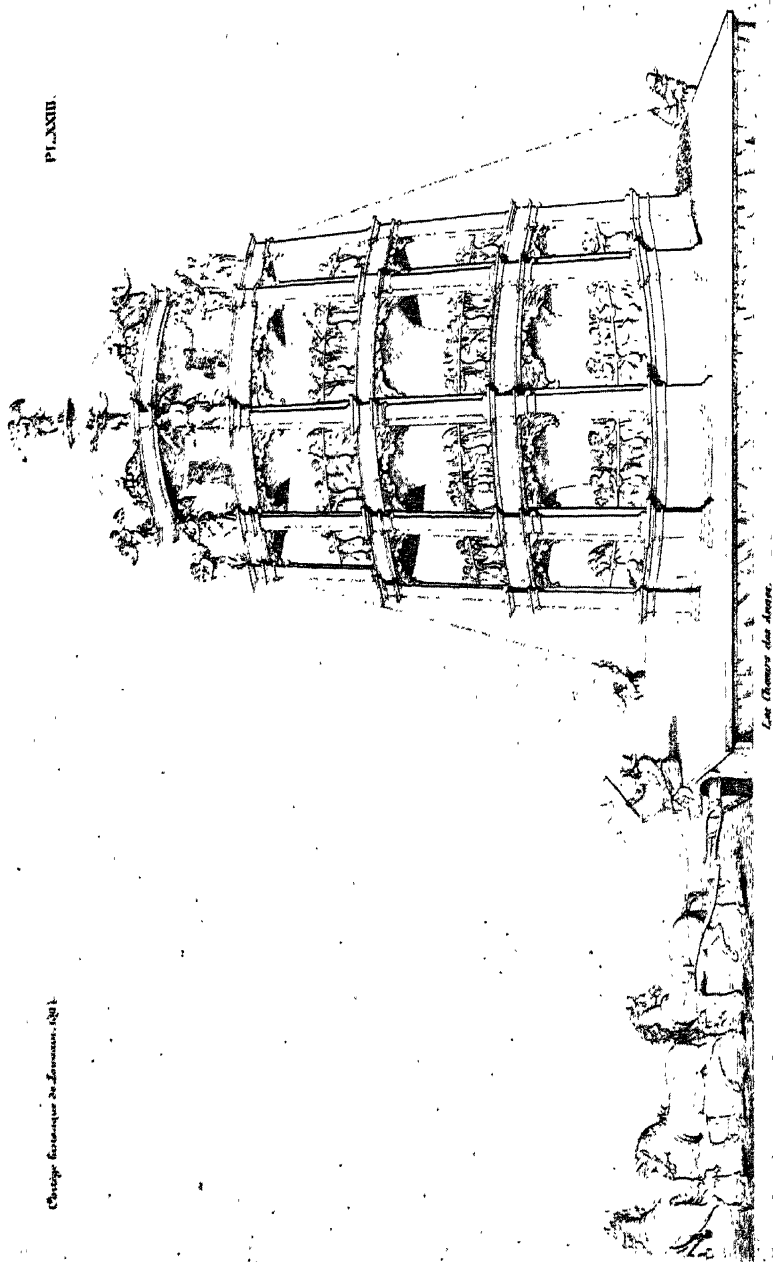
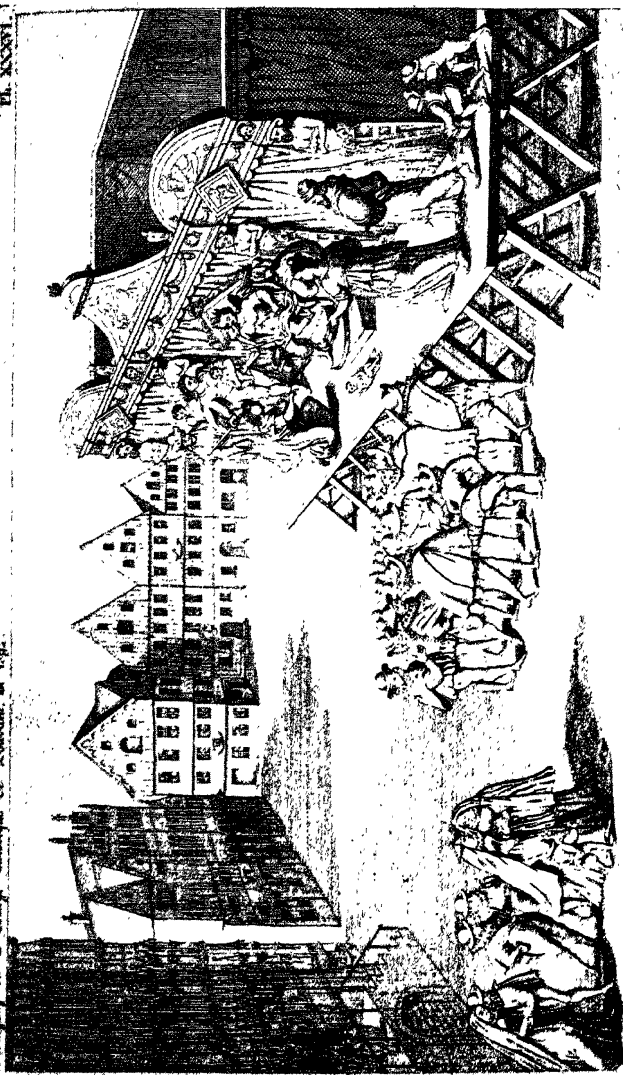


Plate 12. The Nine Choirs of Angels.



Le Jugement ou le Châtiment Satanique De Kossuth, en 1848.

PL. XXXVI



Représentation dramatique (Le Jugement de Kossuth) le Grand'Place, après la rentrée de l'Empereur

Plate 13. The Judgment of Solomon, as played in the Public Square at the conclusion of the Procession by the Chamber of Rhetoric.



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1953

# THE THEATRE ANNUAL

1953



#### EARLY MEXICAN PAINTED BACKDROP

This photograph of a school stage was taken by the late Richard Ceough in the early 1940's in Zapaluta, a hamlet of Chiapas, Mexico, near the Guatemalan border. For what type of production the backdrop was originally painted is not known, but it can easily be seen that its theme was purely Indian, not Spanish or French.



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*1953*

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# THEATRE IN MEXICO MOVES AHEAD

by

JOHN D. MITCHELL

What may result in a true renaissance of the Mexican theatre seems well under way. Old theatres are being restored, new ones are appearing, and famous Mexican artists are being recruited to decorate them. Small theatre groups are being formed and the university—the Ciudad de la Universidad—will have a theatre department and a modernly equipped theatre of its own. And most heartening of all, the Mexican playwright is busy writing Mexican plays.

This activity should come as no surprise to us, for love of theatre as a serious art has always been a part of Mexican culture. Cortez was astounded by the dance spectacles he and his men witnessed on their arrival in Mexico, and records still coming to light indicate clearly that both among the Aztecs and Mayans there were theatrical presentations. At the Mayan ruins of Chichen Itzá in Yucatán there is extant and in a good state of preservation a large stone platform designated now as the Temple of Chacmool. This platform, richly decorated in bas-relief, is interrupted in the center of each side by a stairway of fourteen steps "on which it is said dramas and comedies were presented for the enjoyment of the populace."<sup>1</sup> One has only to think of the platform type stages and the wagon stages of the Middle Ages in Europe to imagine this handsome quadrangular platform being used for stage presentations.

For knowledge of theatrical activity among the Aztecs, we can turn to a description of a celebration at Cholula in honor of the "plumed serpent," the chief Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, which Father Acosta (1539?-1600) left us:

There was in this temple a court of a reasonable greatness, in which they made great dances and pastimes, with games or comedies the day of the idolls feast; for which purpose there was in the midst of this court a theatre of thirty foote square, very finely decked and trimmed, the which

<sup>1</sup> Diego de Landa, *Relación de las Cosas de Yucatán*, translated from *Relation des choses de Yucatan* (Paris: Brasseur de Bourbourg, 1864), p. 120.

they decked with flowers that day, with all the arte and invention that mought be. beeing invironed round with arches of divers flowers and feathers, and in some places there were tied many small birds, connies, and other tame beasts. After dinner all the people assembled in this place, and the players presented themselves, and played comedies: some counterfeited the deafe and the rheumatike, others the lame, some the blinde, and without handes, which came to seeke for cure of the idoll: the deafe answered confusedly, the rheumatike did cough, the lame halted, telling their miseries and griefes, wherewith they made the people to laugh; others came forth in the forme of little beasts, some were attired like snailes, others like toades, and some like lizardes; then meeting together, they tolde their offices, and every one retrying to his place, they sounded on small flutes, which was pleasant to heare. They likewise counterfeited butterflies and small birdes of diverse colours, and the children of the Temple represented these formes; then they went into a little Forrest planted there for the nonce, where the Priests of the Temple drew them forth with instruments of musicke. In the meane time they vsed many pleasant speeches, some in propounding, others in defending, wherewith the assistants were pleasantly intertained. This doone, they made a maske or mummerie with all these personages, and so the feast ended; the which were vsually doone in their principall feasts.<sup>2</sup>

As visible evidence that affection for the theatre did not die through the centuries, there are the number of imposing theatre buildings in Mexico today. Many fine theatres, built in the Nineteenth Century, are to be found in small towns throughout the Republic. There is the Teatro de la Paz in the small mining town of San Luis Potosí, the Teatro Morelos in Aguascalientes, and the Teatro Degollado in Guadalajara, to name only a few. The North American tourist is impressed by the fact that these old buildings have not been converted to cinema houses but still are used as legitimate theatres. Recently a most interesting publication indicates that the Mexican theatre has been rich in the production of plays and dramatic presentations throughout the Republic. It is *El Programa en Cien Años de Teatro en México* and is profusely illustrated with the programs of many of the Mexican theatres of the last hundred years.

Although encouragement of the arts, particularly in theatre, has been slow in coming in Mexico as elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere, it is reassuring to note that the Mexican Government has taken the initial step toward this end. The splendid old Teatro de la Paz has been completely renovated within. A stroll through the expansive modernized foyers accelerates the

<sup>2</sup> Father Joseph de Acosta, *The Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (London 1853), II, 387-388.

heartbeat of any lover of the theatre; one foyer has been converted into an exhibition gallery for contemporary painting and sculpture. The auditorium has new and comfortable seats, excellent sight lines, and a modernity in *décor* that rivals the most modern of Swedish theatres. The vast stage of the old theatre building has excellent equipment, including a switchboard for lighting and a mechanized gridiron. The numerous dressing rooms would be a joy to the actors of Broadway who have grown inured to the dingy and cramped quarters assigned to them in New York and across the country. The Teatro de la Paz is of such a size that it is suitable for operas, concerts, and variety shows, as well as plays. It is to be hoped that the Government will continue its work by restoring the other fine, dignified, old theatres of the Republic.

No visitor to Mexico City can fail to be impressed by the Ciudad de la Universidad. Here in the Pedregal, the lava flow to the south of the capital, the University of Mexico will have a new home. Formerly the University was scattered throughout the city proper; now all of the colleges and departments will be brought together in its own city. Here there has been no aping of a medieval site of culture, for the strikingly modern buildings, stadiums, and plazas invite comparison with the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Mies Van der Rohe. Yet University City is indigenous in its modernity, for the Mexican architects and the celebrated muralist, Diego Rivera, have drawn upon Aztec and Mayan themes, and the pyramids and ball courts of the ruins at Teotihuacán for inspiration. Although the university has not been completed, already many leaders in the commercial theatre of Mexico City have been appointed to its staff. Rodolfo Usigli, the foremost dramatist in Mexico today, will continue to teach his art there. The theatre department should be an excellent one, and the theatre should draw quite an audience.

It is not the Government alone that is lending a hand in the resurgence of theatrical activity. The commercial managers and producers are meeting the problem of supplying new and efficient theatres. At present the theatres in Mexico City are old and in some cases badly in need of repair. Prompted no doubt by the real estate development to the south on the handsome Boulevard Insurgentes, the route to the bullfights at the

monumental Plaza de Toros and to the exotic floating gardens of Xochimilco, one of the finest theatres to be found anywhere in the world, the Teatro Insurgentes, is nearing completion. At long last, thought has been given to the exterior of a new theatre. Its design springs from the building's function as a theatre, the architects by utilizing the towering area above the stage proper have given the total building soaring lines and mass. Moreover, the structure has been given dramatic emphasis by being set off in space. Here, most appropriately, the pride of Mexico, Cantinflas, will present a revue as the opening performance.

The Teatro Insurgentes is not the sole example of new theatres being initiated by commercial producers. For many years there has been a need for intimate theatres in Mexico and now the younger generation of leaders have taken steps to meet this need. One of the most delightful of the intimate theatres is the Teatro del Caballito just off the Avenida Juárez, the entertainment and shopping center of Mexico City. The management has assembled a fine company whose objective is to improve play production and establish a sounder basis for theatre in Mexico.

The theatre of Mexico is plagued by many ills. Some result from ingrained social customs affecting theatregoing; many of them stem from the economic aches and pains so characteristic of theatre everywhere. Likewise, the theatre of Mexico today is not without its problems arising from conflicts with trade unions.

Actors as well as stage technicians belong to theatrical trade unions. It is valueless to state in dollars and cents the established minimums, for they would not indicate how well or poorly paid are the theatre workers below the border. In relation to the standard of living of the country, however, they do not fare as well as do their counterparts in the States. In one respect they are more fortunate. The center of the film industry is in Mexico City and the actors can supplement their incomes by appearing in films with no need of a Broadway to Hollywood "cross-country dash."

As in the United States, the Mexican theatre is chronically in conflict with the Musicians Union and there as here no equitable solution of the problem has been achieved.



The trade unions in Mexico do not seem to worry about "overtime" for their members. It comes as a shock to discover that performances of plays are given twice daily, seven days a week. One of Usigli's successes ran for several months without a single day of rest for the cast. Mr. Usigli is well aware of the great strain this imposes upon the actors, and he is in the forefront of those who wish to change this old custom.

Besides the vitality a play loses by being performed by actors suffering from fatigue, one other custom detracts from each performance. This is the use of the *souffleur*, the prompter downstage center in his shell just behind the footlights. He came to the New World when the French theatre was the only acceptable one in the higher echelons of Mexican society, and now he is an established tradition in the Mexican theatre. He harasses the Mexican playwrights, for actors are only human and in the relaxed tempo of life in Mexico they depend on the prompter at the expense of the play and its performance. They seldom learn their lines but let the little man downstage feed them to them. This plague is not easy of eradication, for the prompter belongs to a trade union and should manager and playwright not wish to employ him, he must be paid nonetheless.

Although the theatre in Mexico survived the great changes wrought in an Indian culture by the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores and continued to flourish after the introduction of a new religion, a new language, and a more formal type of drama, it is still battling to emerge as a popular art form. In some respects it has labored under the stigmas that prevented opera in the United States from gaining a wider acceptance on the part of the people. The average Mexican has not as yet been enticed into attending a theatre where plays are being presented. He takes his family either to the motion pictures or to a sort of music hall with a variety of entertainment: popular, topical, lusty, and sometimes coarse.

It cannot be said that the cost of a ticket has been a major deterrent; equated with the standard of living of the office worker, the student, the professional man—and the cost of a seat for the Sunday bullfight—the cost of admission to a legitimate theatre is not as great as in the States. One has to search elsewhere for an explanation, and it is to be found in that stigma, "a plaything of society," with which the theatre is cursed.

Whereas in the United States since World War II dressing in formal attire has largely disappeared for attendance even at a première, this custom seems highly honored in Mexico down to the smallest intimate theatre. A gala opening in Mexico City outshines in brilliant display of fine feathers the opening of the season at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. The audience is largely drawn from society, and the attitude is entrenched that one goes to the theatre less to see a play than to meet one's friends and show off fine clothes, furs, and jewels. No wonder that the "little man" stays away.

Of course, for many generations a language barrier did exclude a popular audience. The French theatre reigned unchallenged until the present post-War period (there still is a resident French company playing in that language throughout the year in Mexico City). In the early years of the Republic the wealthy and influential sent their children abroad to be educated, and the language of their preference was French, rather than their native Spanish. Interestingly enough this is undergoing a rapid change. More and more children are getting at least part of their education in one of the North American universities or colleges. The change has been accelerated without doubt by the long war in Europe and also by the increased commercial activity between American industry and business in Mexico. The most elaborate store in Mexico City and in Guadalajara is Sears, Roebuck—pronounced Say-ars Roo-book. In all areas of living in Mexico the average man's orientation is now toward the civilization to the north rather than south or across the sea to Europe.

Naturally this recent development has influenced the theatre in Mexico. Rodolfo Usigli, whose activities have already been mentioned and who is the ranking and most popularly successful playwright in Mexico today, received his advanced theatre training at the Yale Drama School; for two seasons a theatre in Mexico City, run by Americans, enjoyed success through importing such Broadway successes as the late Gertrude Lawrence in Shaw's *Pygmalion*; and the new intimate theatres, although dedicated to developing local talents, indicate by their repertoires the extent to which their interest turns to the plays of North American playwrights like Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, John Patrick, and others.

There seems to be in evidence a subtle influence of the North American styled plays on the works of contemporary Mexican playwrights. A slower pacing and emphasis on language, long speeches—aspects of continental plays which make for such difficulty in adapting them for presentation in New York—are not characteristic of the plays of modern Mexican playwrights. Rather there is the briskness in action and dialogue so characteristic of North American plays.

Spanish influence on the Mexican theatre is very slight. It may well be to the contrary. Plays of Usigli and others are being performed in Spain. This must be a great source of satisfaction to those in the contemporary Mexican theatre, for was not one of the greatest of Spanish playwrights of the Sixteenth Century. Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, a native son of their country?

Now that a monopoly of French influence in the theatre has been broken, the native playwrights are drawing upon the local scene, the daily life of the Mexican people, and the country's colorful, and at times turbulent, history for their plots. The most successful play of the past season (1952) was *Janus is a Woman* (*Jeno es una Muchacha*) by Rodolfo Usigli. It enjoyed a run of months, something which is the exception rather than the rule in Mexico. The theme of the play is indigenous yet its interest and appeal are universal. Some see in it, as well as in Usigli's past great success, *The Boy in the Mist* (*El Niño y la Niebla*) the influence of Strindberg's realism. In both plays, however, Usigli is directly concerned with a Mexican milieu and the women of Mexico. *Janus is a Woman* treats of a Mexican woman of mercurial temperament which is destructive at times. As its title suggests, the playwright conceives this woman as similar to the two-faced Roman God, Janus. *The Boy in the Mist* depicts a possessive Mexican woman whose inability to accept a husband's claim to sharing in the affection of their son results in the tragic death of the child.

Another characteristic Mexican play of the past season was *The Idol* (*El Idolo*) by Rafael Bernal which opened the new Teatro del Caballito. It is a high comedy drawing upon the life of the film folk of Mexico City. Although in direction and setting the production lacked the finish of a London, Paris, or New York presentation, it was professional theatre at a high level. The springboard of the plot is the loss of the film idol

of Mexico to Hollywood. With machinations and amusing complications, the Mexican film company and *el idolo's* friends set out to rescue him from the rival film industry of the United States.

Other representative plays that have been well received in past seasons are *Woman Does Not Create Miracles* (*La Mujer no hace Milagros*) and *Crown of Shadows* (*Corona de Sombra*) by Usigli. *La Mujer* produced in the '40's, is a domestic comedy arising from the daily life of a Mexican family, and *Corona* dramatizes the tragic story of the Emperor Maximilian and his wife, Carlotta. The latter was produced in 1947 and elicited high praise from the late Bernard Shaw who said that "this Mexican tragedy is entirely homogeneous, noble throughout its variety and novelty." Another critic said that "with this play rises a curtain on a golden age of American theatre."

This "golden age" of the theatre differs in two distinct ways from the theatre of New York, one to the disadvantage of the native playwright and the other to his great advantage. The audiences in Mexico are the despair of managers and playwrights. In their finery they arrive late, even though, as in Latin countries of Europe, the curtain does not rise until nine or nine-thirty. Reluctantly the "socialites" move into the auditorium, often causing a delay of as much as one-half hour. Even then the play cannot run through without bowing to the custom of intermissions of no less than three quarters of an hour. When the play has three acts, attending it becomes an almost all-night affair. Needless to say, one objective of the new theatre groups is the re-education of the audience.

The audience response to a play in Mexico is direct. The playwrights do not have to wait up all night in fear and trepidation to read the morning reviews as they do in New York. Although the metropolitan newspapers have their critics, it is the opinion of the producers, actors, and playwrights of the Mexican theatre that their influence is slight. For some reason there seems to be an indifference as well as a cynicism in Mexico concerning the critical reviews of the journalists there. A playwright can hope for favorable word-of-mouth reports on his new play to make it a success.

# BEN JONSON AND THE "HUMOURS"

by

JAMES H. CLANCY

Time has played a cruel jest on Ben Jonson. Not only have his works been banished to the library, but the years have to some extent blurred the outline of a theory of comedy which he took great pains to clarify. It may be that had he been less insistent on what he meant, the modern scholar would be more so. His very particularity has been his undoing; it has cooled the scholarly ardor, seldom exercised in following a trail too warm, turning it from definition into the more devious paths of origin and influence.<sup>1</sup>

Because of this disproportion, we must frankly return to Jonson and review in his own language what he considered the place of the "humours" in the concept of dramatic character. He stated it nowhere more explicitly than in the Induction to *Every Man out of his Humour*, which, though written after his original success with *Every Man in his Humour*, was the first humour play he prepared for the press. In the Induction Jonson states that he intends:

To giue these ignorant well-spoken dayes,  
Some taste of their abuse of this word Humour.

Then, as befits the Inns of Court to whom the Induction is dedicated, he gives a detailed and partly scientific account of his use of the word:

Why, Humour (as 'tis *ens*) we thus define it  
To be a quality of aire or water,  
And in it selfe holds these two properties,  
Moisture and fluxure: As, for demonstration,

<sup>1</sup> For some of the major variations of modern definition, see Charles Read Baskerville, *English Elements in Jonson's Early Comedy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1911), pp. 35, 52, 72; Paul V. Kreider, *Elizabethan Comic Conventions as Revealed in the Comedies of George Chapman* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1935), pp. 145-146; Allardyce Nicoll, *The Theory of Drama* (London: George O. Harrap, 1931), p. 220; Willard Smith, *The Nature of Comedy* (Boston: R. G. Badger, 1930), p. 139; Oscar James Campbell, *Shakespeare's Satire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 66; Percy Simpson, ed., *Ben Jonson's "Every Man in His Humour"* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1919), p. xl. The listing is not exhaustive.

Powre water on this floore, 'twill wet and runne:  
 Likewise the aire (forc't through a horne, or trumpet)  
 Flowes instantly away, and leaues behind  
 A kind of dew; and hence we doe conclude,  
 That what soe're hath fluxure, and humiditie,  
 As wanting power to containe it selfe,  
 Is Humour. So in euery humane body  
 The Choller, melancholy, flegme, and bloud,  
 By reason that they flow continually  
 In some one part, and are not continent,  
 Receiue the name of Humours. Now thus farre  
 It may, by *Metaphore*, apply it selfe  
 Vnto the generall disposition:  
 As when some one peculiar quality  
 Doth so possesse a man, that it doth draw  
 All his affects, his spirits, and his powers,  
 In their confluxions, all to runne one way,  
 This may be truly said to be a Humour.  
 But that a rooke, in wearing a pyed feather,  
 The cable hat-band, or the three-pild ruffe,  
 A yard of shooteye, or the *Switzers* knot  
 On his French garters, should affect a Humour!  
 O, 'tis more then most ridiculous.

.....  
 And to these courteous eyes oppose a mirrour,  
 As large as is the stage, whereon we act;  
 Where they shall see the times deformitie  
 Anatomiz'd in euery nerue, and sinnew,  
 With constant courage, and contempt of feare.<sup>2</sup>

When this quotation is read in its entirety, the initial impression is of Jonson's dependence upon contemporary scientific theory as a basis for his character portrayal. By the latter part of the Sixteenth Century, the physiological concept of the humours had become popular doctrine.<sup>3</sup> In spite of Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood in 1628, the humour theory remained a common lay explanation of observed phenomena through much of the Seventeenth Century. This theory of the influence of the four fluids, or humours, on the human body went back to Hippocrates, who first differentiated them. It was fos-

<sup>2</sup> *Every Man out of his Humour*, Induction, ll. 88-123. All references to specific lines in Jonson's plays are from the edition of the *Works*, eds., C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson (7 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-1942).

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed discussion of Elizabethan physiology and psychology see P. Ansell Robin, "The old physiological doctrine of spirits as reflected in English literature," *Englische Studien*, XL (1909), 332-350; E. M. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1944), pp. 62 ff.; John W. Draper, *The Humours & Shakespeare's Characters* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1945), *passim*; and Edward Dowden, "Elizabethan Psychology," *Essays Modern and Elizabethan* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1910).

tered by Galen under whose aegis it became part of the scientific doctrine of the Renaissance.<sup>4</sup> The Elizabethan, however, found it as difficult as we do to illustrate a general psychological theory by specific instances, and thus the mixture of the humours, once accepted as being theoretically "normal," began to be regarded as unusual, or in a sense, "abnormal." Crites, in *Cynthia's Revels* (Act I, sc. iii), represents such a sport:

A creature of a most perfect and divine temper. One, in whom the humours and elements are peaceably met, without emulation of precedence: he is neyther to [*sic*] phantastikely melancholy, too slowly phlegmaticke, too lightly sanguine, or too rashly cholericke, but in all, so compoſde and order'd as it is cleare, *Nature* went about some ful worke, she did more then [*sic*] make a man, when she made him.

In practice, both for the physiologist and the satirist, it was found that Nature had been somewhat amiss in her work and that in most people one humour predominated, producing those individual idiosyncrasies of temperament which helped to fill the purses of both master of letters and doctor of medicine.

Upon such a popular scientific theory did Jonson build his comedies, but he employed it only in its more generally accepted facets. His obvious love of Latinisms has far too long obscured the fact that he was primarily a man of the theatre and only secondarily a scholar or anything else. Thus, for our present purpose, one of the most important lines of the Induction already quoted is:

Now thus farre  
It may, by *Metaphore*, apply it selfe  
Vnto the generall disposition:

Jonson has stated the scientific authority; he now tells us that he is going to make use of that authority in a poetic and dramatic manner. He is seizing upon a scientific idiom which he can use as a means of projecting his ideas of Man and the society he creates.

It is beyond dispute that Freud's inquiry into the effect of sex on human behavior has been one of the chief influences in the molding of the current and popular concept of character and action. Modern playwrights, consciously or unconsciously, all

<sup>4</sup> In its most common conception, it was believed that the four humours (choler, blood, phlegm, and melancholy) were prepared in the gall, the spleen, and the liver, and by their admixture determined the disposition of the individual. Their balanced product was called the individual's "temperament" or "complexion." When the individual was in normal health or spirits, no specific humour dominated but each served within its proper function to produce a generally equable character.

reflect this influence to some degree. The more serious the playwright's approach, the more apparent the influence is apt to be. In tragedy the result can be seen in the works of Eugene O'Neill, from *Different* through *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Jonson, though he may have grasped his material with a firmer and more didactic hand than O'Neill, was not less influenced by contemporary popular science.

Both playwrights, so far removed in time and literary temper, so divergent in their views on life, have in their choice of scientific reinforcement, demonstrated a true grasp of dramatic necessity. The drama, being a concise and telescoped art, generally deals more with inherited characteristics than, for example, the novel, or the old chronicle plays which Jonson scorned as being prone

To make a child, now swadled, to proceede  
Man, and then shoote vp, in one beard, and weede,  
Past threescore years. . . .<sup>5</sup>

He felt, perhaps rightly, that this could not be accomplished adequately upon the stage. He wished for compression, both of time and of character; only thus could he produce the sharp effects he desired. The physiology of humours, freely used, provided him with an adequate and accepted motivation of his characters.

After noting the factual basis of humours, and stating that he intends to use this material in a metaphorical manner, Jonson comes to the nub of his adaptation—the oft-quoted “definition”:

As when some one peculiar quality  
Doth so possesse a man, that it doth draw  
All his affects, his spirits, and his powers,  
In their confluxions, all to runne one way,  
This may be truly said to be a humour.

His purpose is evident here and his use of the verb “possesse” is important. A humour is an individual force which has its origin within the particular physiological arrangement of the individual in question but assumes in a sense an independent life and dominates the organism in which it has been produced. The humour owns and regulates the man, as, in the old church phraseology, the demon possessed and controlled him. When

<sup>5</sup> *Every Man in his Humour*, Prologue (Folio, 1616) ll. 7-9.



Jonson composed his comedies, the Witch of Edmonton was still more than a stage convention and the Weird Sisters were not merely embodiments of the evil desires in Macbeth's soul as modern psychological criticism is apt to interpret them. To the Elizabethan, the demon once admitted gains complete control and sovereignty. The normal functioning of the unpossessed is disrupted

. . . and the state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection.<sup>6</sup>

This background of demonology<sup>\*</sup> served as counterpoint to Jonson's conception of the humour shaping and predicting individual action. The characters were prepared for satiric flagellation in such a manner that humanity itself was not being attacked but rather the parasitic growth that lived within it and transformed it from the thing it was. One of the most distinguishing features of a humour is that it has its own inner propulsion, its own "circulation." It is a parasite that develops within and finally controls the former master.

As the Induction suggests, a humour may also be illustrated by a negative example. Above all, it is not an aping of the latest fashion in externals. Here Jonson is brushing aside some of the contemporary uses of the word in order that he may stand more rigid and foursquare. It is true that he was to satirize the fool of fashion, but, as in the case of Fastidious Briske, only where there was more to work upon than a tailor's dummy.

Jonson's theory of the use of humours in dramatic form is most just in its application to *Every Man out of his Humour*, for here he uses it more than in any other drama. It is mainly Medieval in background, yet certain other influences help to support it and to widen its scope, so that the final result, as practised by him in the full sweep of his works, is more fertile and varied than would have been possible had he solely followed the theory expounded in the Induction to *Every Man out*.

The first and most obvious reinforcement for his new doctrine in comedy is suggested in the Prologue to the Folio (1616) *Every Man in his Humour*. After satirizing the usual hugger-

<sup>\*</sup> *Julius Caesar*, II, 1, 63.

mugger of the chronicle plays, Jonson asserts that he will deal with

. . . deedes, and language, such as men doe vse;  
and persons, such as *Comoedie* would chuse,  
When she would shew an Image of the times,  
And sport with humane follies, not with crimes.<sup>7</sup>

Here, as Simpson has noted, Jonson is following along the "beaten track of Renaissance criticism."<sup>8</sup> One of the watchdogs of this critical dogma was verisimilitude: likeness to truth. Today we use the equally abused word "realism," and mean as little by it, and as much. To Jonson the theory was valuable, for it fitted in well with the concept of humours, which viewed the character from one definite angle, and likewise fused with the Medieval abstraction, thus permitting the acceptance of humour types by both the scholar and the unschooled, the author and the audience.

Beyond verisimilitude, however, there was decorum which permitted Jonson to handle only "persons, such as *Comoedie* would chuse," and these only in situations which dealt with "humane follies, not with crimes." Jonson was never to go so far as Rymer in his interpretation of the neo-classic theory of character portrayal (*Bartholomew Fair* shows he had more vital interests), but he firmly believed that art was the product of Man's energy controlled by self-imposed forms. His concept of humours and the doctrines of verisimilitude and decorum were well met; the humours narrowed yet sharpened the outlook; the neo-classic doctrines, sparingly used, fortified the use of humours and gave it breadth and stature.

Jonson is neo-classic, too, when he states that he intends to "sport with humane follies, not with crimes," though he has frequently been criticized for disregarding his pledge. But he, zealous in the cause, reduced the distance between a folly and a crime. A folly could, to his mind, become a crime if extended and perpetuated. It was his purpose, through scornful and sanitary laughter, to shorten the term and prevent the transition. It is a matter of degree, not of kind; the characters in *Volpone* are near the brink of crime, those in *Every Man in his Humour*, only on the gentle slopes of folly.

Beside this general absorption of neo-classicism, one other

<sup>7</sup> *Every Man in his Humour*, Prologue, ll. 21-24.

<sup>8</sup> *Works*, p. xxxix.

prevailing attitude was merged with the Jonsonian humour, giving it increased depth and color, but at times straining the normal organized boundaries of the play-unit almost to the bursting point. This force, though vague in outline, may most usefully be classified as a love of the grotesque. In its normal appearance in his works this gleeful recording of the grotesque served to etch more deeply the outlines of Jonson's humour characters and to provide them with a touch of understandable comic caricature. The theatre needed to present highly colored characters to compete not only with the bear-baiting next door but also with the fascinating swarm of humanity crawling and capering along the bridge to Southwark. Jonson shared with most Elizabethans this vital curiosity in his fellow men. He enjoyed the "thing" that walked and talked and acted hugely under the sun. It was this awareness that helped him to dramatize a "Ship of Fools" and to enjoy the product as a sideshow while he accomplished, to his own satisfaction, his didactic aim of teaching by a humiliating laughter.

This summarizes the main points of Jonson's theoretical definition of the use of humours in comic characterization, but literary ideas and practices do not at all times interpenetrate with the same degree of fusion. The White and the Blue Nile of Jonson's thought merge and separate with no scientific regularity but are answerable only to the creative impulse of the particular dramatic situation.

In practice, however, four general types of humour characters are discernible. The first and the most closely allied with the physiological concept of humour is the man with a true inborn bent, incapable of self-correction. The character, because of a dominant moisture, is completely swayed in one direction, is an embodiment of that direction, through no choice of his own nor through any apparent outward pressure. He is what he is and no palliation is offered. His punishment varies with the amount of evil he might be capable of bringing upon society. The modern reader usually dismisses such characters as "types," calling them literary confections, because of their lack of self-consciousness. But Jonson did not often think in stereotypes and is usually concerned with pushing the results of his acrid observation to the point of the grotesque so that the proper derisive (hence corrective) laughter would result. Many of Jonson's chief characters

are conceived along these lines: Morose, Volpone, Mosca, Epicure Mammon. To us they are admirable as dramatic creations chiefly through the verve and pervading power with which their inborn bent is given sway.

The second type is nearly related to the first in that it, too, is incapable of self-correction. The difference lies in that the character bent is ingrained rather than inborn, or, to use a more modern terminology, the personality is acquired not inherited. At first glance this might seem to be a radical departure from the physiological concept of humour, and indeed it would be had Jonson at any time been wedded other than metaphorically to such a theory. But as modern genetic study narrows the distance between heredity and environment by its theory of potentials, so we may see that even Medieval physiology could account for a predilection toward certain types of social pressure. This is the case with Jonson: the physiology of humours, reinforced as it was with his interest in the neo-classic emphasis on character by social degree and occupation, led to a kind of dramatic personage distinguished by a personality bent resulting partially from social forces. Such are Macilente, Sordido, Subtle, Kitem, and Brainworm. Subtle is as helpless to combat his humour as if it had had a complete physiological basis, and relief only comes to him when the environmental cause of his delusion is altered. The same is true of Macilente and Sordido. They are helplessly in the grip of their ingrained bent until some violent *deus ex machina*, such as attempted suicide, presents their environment to them in a completely revolutionized aspect.

The last two types created by Jonson differ from those already discussed in kind as well as in degree. Their will to accomplish the hypothetically normal action is crippled not so much by implacable internal or external pressures but chiefly by lack of intelligence. Their humours are self-correctable, assuming, of course, that they are willing or forced to sit at the rugged but jocular knee of Ben. Let us take the less stupid of these two types first. Here is a man who affects an inward bent, or through self-delusion allows himself to be carried astray by a self-correctable passion, and whose punishment is conceived in terms necessary to bring him back to normal, or to a balanced mixture of his humours. Sometimes it is indicated that he will maintain this balance; at other times, once the corrective lash is furlled,

we are prepared for a speedy backsliding, partly through ineptitude but often occasioned by a stubborn and willful maintenance of those idiosyncrasies which had motivated the punishment. Again we see a certain amount of the true metaphorical humour psychology at work, for such a man's very nature has helped to make him a fool, along with Jonson's love of the grotesque and the individual. Sir Politick Would-be, Zeal-of-the-land-Busy, and Puntarvolo are obvious examples of this type, all three "wholly consecrated to singularity" and "resolving (in despite of publike derision) to sticke to his owne particular fashion, phrase, and gesture."<sup>9</sup>

The last general type serves a double purpose for Jonson: he spices his plays with its oddities, and he uses it satirically as a negative example of what the humour character should be. This type is represented by the lightheaded man who believes he will gain stature by adopting a humour, but cannot advance beyond the general concept of humour as a matter of mere externals: a ribboned dress, a manner of speech, a love of precious sayings he does not comprehend. Here Jonson abandons completely the humour concept and creates entirely out of his love of the grotesque and his desire for satirical clarification. Indeed, the satire cuts two ways: at such idiosyncracies found in contemporary society and at the other playwrights who proffer as studies in humours "essentiall Clownes" such as Sogliardo or Stephen.

These then are the main outlines of the Jonsonian concept of character based upon humours: three influences—Medieval physiology, neo-classic critical canons, Renaissance individualism—which produce four general types. Three of these types are true humours: the inborn bent, the ingrained bent, and the adapted bent. The fourth is the negation of a true humour, an external affectation that attempts to pass for a character trait. It may seem that in straining for clarity and order we have only rivalled the Medieval love of the triform spirits and the quadriform components of the world. If so, the difficulty is inherent in the attempt, and it must be stressed again that Jonson's approach to his plays was not ours: his was creative and could afford to ignore when it chose any nice boundary that cribb'd its larger spirit.

<sup>9</sup> *Every Man out of his Humour*. Jonson's prefaced description of Puntarvolo.

## EUGENE O'NEILL ON THE GERMAN STAGE

by

HORST FRENZ

Every European familiar with the American drama and theatre knows the name of Eugene O'Neill. There is hardly a country in which his plays have not been performed and very few languages into which at least certain of his works have not been translated. Some outstanding stage productions have helped to establish his fame in Europe: *The Emperor Jones* and *All God's Chillun Got Wings* with Paul Robeson in London, in 1925 and 1933 respectively; the first European production of *Marco Millions* in Prague in 1930; *Mourning Becomes Electra* in Stockholm, with Tora Teje and Lars Hansson in the chief roles, in 1933; the same play in Vienna in 1938; and the Abbey performance of *Days Without End* in Dublin in 1934. In 1936, O'Neill received international recognition by being awarded the Nobel Prize. The honor was bestowed upon him "in recognition of his dramatic art, imbued with strength, honesty and deep feeling, as well as by a personal and original conception of tragedy."

German publishers, producers, and critics at an early date showed an interest in O'Neill and contributed substantially to his wide reception on the European continent. Many of the smaller Central European countries looked to the Berlin and Munich theatres for additions to their repertoires, and German book publishers often held the copyrights to American and British plays printed in various countries. Thus Germany, in the case of O'Neill and other American dramatists, became their intermediary with audiences and readers in Vienna, Budapest, Prague, and other cities.

O'Neill was introduced into Germany in the early Twenties, at a time when futurism, imagism, cubism, expressionism, and other "isms" had become the vogue, when the urge for novelty and the desire for experimentation were paramount, and when

Germans were looking beyond their borders for unusual literary material and striking theatre techniques.

Three men primarily responsible for stimulating the interest in O'Neill were Alfred Kerr, the spirited drama critic of the *Berliner Tageblatt*; Gustav Kauder, a journalist, who was to translate several of O'Neill's plays into German; and the Austrian playwright, Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Kerr and Kauder had come in contact with O'Neill's works during their visits to the United States. They informed the German public about the foremost dramatist of the New World and acted almost as his advance agents. Hofmannsthal gave in *Das Tagebuch* of 1923 an evaluation which may be considered the beginning of an O'Neill criticism on the European continent.

The first thing that impressed Hofmannsthal was that O'Neill's work was "throughout essentially of the theatre." In his own plays Hofmannsthal shows a fondness for key words, for the device of the motif, and for the repetition of a situation, and he felt that "the structural power and pre-eminent simplicity" of O'Neill's works were intensified by such technical processes. The dialogue he called "powerful, often direct, and frequently endowed with a brutal though picturesque lyricism." O'Neill, he added, "reveals the first burst of his emotions in powerful, clean-cut pictures that seem almost like simple ballads in our complex world."<sup>1</sup>

After a discussion of the static and dynamic elements in drama in general, Hofmannsthal compared O'Neill's plays with those of Gerhart Hauptmann. Commenting on the last acts in Hauptmann's plays, he pointed out that by accumulating much of the spiritual life of his characters, the German dramatist fills the end of his plays "with an almost explosive force, so that there is no need for the introduction of any mechanical tension." This method differs from O'Neill's in that the first acts of O'Neill's dramas are the strongest while the last ones are much weaker. The close of both *The Hairy Ape* and *The Emperor Jones* seemed to him to be too direct, too simple, too expected; the last acts of *Anna Christie* and *The First Man* somewhat evasive and undecided. Hofmannsthal offered as a reason for this general weakness the explanation "that the dramatist, unable

<sup>1</sup> Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Eugene O'Neill," *The Freeman*, VII (March 21, 1923), 40. This is an English version of Hofmannsthal's article.

to make his dialogue a complete expression of human motives, is forced at the end simply to squeeze it out like a wet sponge."<sup>2</sup> He concluded his "dramaturgical reflections" by emphasizing O'Neill's "very great" qualities as a dramatist and predicted that the American would "make progress when, in the course of time, which is necessary to each man who creates, he shall have acquired better control over his materials, and above all over his own considerable talents."

It was most unfortunate for O'Neill's European reputation that the pioneer work exerted on his behalf was followed by a number of ill-fated first productions which made Europeans wonder about the achievements of the "foremost" American playwright. The presentation of *Anna Christie* in the Deutsches Theater in Berlin on October 9, 1923, had little to recommend it. First of all, a colorless translation had been made, peculiarly enough by the Hungarian Melchior Lengyel whose "qualifications as literary go-between were limited to a Berlitz acquaintance with English and German. What he may have guessed in English, he was utterly unable to express in German."<sup>3</sup> The actress, Käthe Dorsch, who was recommended by Lengyel as "the ideal one" for the title role, apparently gave an "utterly static" interpretation. In contrast to her American counterpart, she "lacked all the metallic brilliance necessary to give the role surface."<sup>4</sup> According to C. Hooper Trask, there was not enough differentiation "between the hardened callousness of the first act and the simple directness of the closing ones." Furthermore, the director, Fritz Wendhausen, over-sentimentalized the story and changed the ending by making it "tragic" and highly melodramatic: "O'Neill ended the play by having the prostitute and the sailor come together, helplessly drawn by a heavy unescapable sensuality, unlightened by the slightest glow of real joy."<sup>5</sup> Wendhausen had the girl, with no motivation whatsoever, suddenly produce a gun, fire it into her temple, and with "*Auf Wiedersehen*" on her lips, collapse on the deck. The version ended with father and lover bending over the body murmuring: "Poor little girl."

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Kommer, "Eugene O'Neill in Europe," *Greenwich Playbill*, season 1924-1925, no. 2.

<sup>4</sup> C. Hooper Trask, "Eugene O'Neill in Berlin," *New York World*, January 4, 1925.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



No wonder then that the critic, Friedrich Düssel, called the play "real sentimental trash from across the sea," another referred to it as melodrama for lonely and sensitive souls, and a third one said that *Anna Christie* "might have moved our great-grandmothers to tears, but for modern audiences it is nothing more than a hotch-potch of mock sentiment."<sup>6</sup> Kurt Pinthus remarked in the *Acht Uhr Abendblatt* that had this play been written by one of the younger or older German playwrights "he would have been carried to the grave and buried, to the accompaniment of peals of scornful laughter." He concluded that the play is impossible for Germany "though we are willing to concede to the author a certain cleverness in creating types and give him credit for his championship of downtrodden humanity."<sup>7</sup>

Alfred Kerr, who in his book, *New York und London*,<sup>8</sup> had spoken so enthusiastically of O'Neill, must have felt greatly embarrassed by the selection and production of *Anna Christie*. In his column in the *Berliner Tageblatt* he called the play "a fashion in drama that has been packed away in moth balls—a has been, a has been!"<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, he did not give up his original contention that the Continent would have to pay more attention to the dramatic achievements of the New World.

The production of the second O'Neill play in Germany suffered also from technical inadequacies. The director, Berthold Viertel, "a neo-expressionist of the most radical brand,"<sup>10</sup> had carried his modernistic theories so far that the settings of *Kaiser Jones* did not convey the illusion of a primeval forest even to a credulously disposed audience. Rugs covering tree trunks, paper strips and rags, transparent trees, and glaring red lights gave more the "effect of a backyard hung with dirty washing"<sup>11</sup> than the impression of a mysterious forest powerful enough to destroy an emperor. The sounding of the tom-tom was without gradation and, instead of holding the public's attention, it only wearied them, especially as the constant shooting had already affected the spectators' nerves. However, the last scene, in which the magi-

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Düssel, *Westermanns Monatshefte*, CXXXV (1923-1924), 404. The other two accounts are quoted in the *New York Herald*, November 4, 1923.

<sup>7</sup> Kurt Pinthus, *Acht Uhr Abendblatt*, October 11, 1923.

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Kerr, *New York und London* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1923).

<sup>9</sup> Alfred Kerr, *Berliner Tageblatt*, October 10, 1923.

<sup>10</sup> Rudolf Kommer, *Greenwich Playbill*, no. 2.

<sup>11</sup> C. Hooper Trask, *New York World*, January 4, 1925. Similar opinions were expressed by various German critics, among them Paul Fechter, Felix Holländer, Alfred Kerr, and Alfred Klaar.

cian, yelling in furious exultation and dancing to the madly beating drums, forces Jones to dance in a circle, received praise from at least one critic. "This scene," said Felix Emmel, "reveals the meaning and rhythm of a poetic work which has found its finest expression."<sup>12</sup>

Oskar Homolka, then an almost unknown young actor, was given credit for having done a fine piece of acting, although the slightly Viennese intonation, as a substitute for Negro slang, must have been rather disturbing. He was especially good in the first part when the role is filled with humor, when he portrayed the criminal characteristics, the excess strength, the cynical superiority of the profiteer. But, we are informed, he was unable to be equally effective as the pursued animal of the forest and incapable of intensifying his fears as a result of the visions and hallucinations. Partly, Trask thinks, that may have been the director's fault who "had Jones shout out his very first speech at the top of his lungs, making it absolutely impossible for the actor of the role, who was not untalented and well suited for the character, to build to any further height."<sup>13</sup>

In general, the critics preferred the first scenes in which dialogue prevails and satire dominates to the monologue of the latter part of the play when the Emperor becomes a tragic figure. It was difficult for some of them to take this criminal seriously, much less tragically. And yet, a few did recognize that the play contained original and exotic elements, that there was a clash between forest and civilization over a human being. One critic saw an attempt at presenting the grotesque picture of a primitive culture (*Halbkultur*), a Negro's psychology, and ethnological characterization. Of course, there were those who had no use at all for the play. Düsel, for instance, felt that the energies of actors and director had been wasted on a play which lacked a theme of any interest as well as action, development, and characters. He blamed the predilection for strange and unusual themes, the *Furor Exoticus*, for importing such a play, for he contended that expressionistic distortions of emotions were prevalent enough in Germany, and concluded with this exclamatory question: "Does anyone seriously think that here

<sup>12</sup> Felix Emmel, "Die Truppe: O'Neill, *Kaiser Jones*," *Preussische Jahrbücher*, CLXXXV (1924), 214.

<sup>13</sup> C. Hooper Trask, *New York World*, January 4, 1925.

is a symbolic 'Act of Justice' for all, even European tyrannies?"<sup>14</sup> Interestingly enough, the play was completely misunderstood by the monarchist and militarist newspapers. The *Deutsche Zeitung* described it as attempting, with the help of sensationalism and wild stage effects, to "deride Kaiserdom" and concluded happily that these political thrusts did not make an impression on the first-night audience.<sup>15</sup>

Regardless of this reception of O'Neill's plays, German directors continued to show an interest in them, and through the presentation of *The Hairy Ape* at the Tribüne in Berlin on October 31, 1924, the playwright was said to have become "naturalized in Germany."<sup>16</sup> Eugen Robert's production was "a conscientious and sincerely intended attempt," and O'Neill's stage directions were followed faithfully. The scenery was "competent, if uninspired,"<sup>17</sup> although the stage of the Tribüne, as Monty Jacobs pointed out in the *Vossische Zeitung*, was far too limited for the free development of the scenes on Fifth Avenue or in the stokehole and for some of O'Neill's technical devices. He praised the art of Eugen Klöpfer in the title role and singled out the union scene for special attention:

. . . With dangling arms and dragging steps, as clumsy and artless as an animal, he opens his heart to these men of the world. When they overpower him and throw him to the ground, his simplicity takes on a savior's traits, the characteristics of a despised cross-bearer. . . .<sup>18</sup>

Düsel and Knudsen also commented on Klöpfer's acting ability, his naïvete and simple emotions, his mental sufferings, but, as in the case of O'Neill's earlier plays, they felt that the German theatre was not being enriched and objected to such American importations.<sup>19</sup>

In the Twenties, other plays by O'Neill found their way to the theatres of Berlin as well as of the German provinces. In December 1924, Erwin Piscator tried his hand at a one-act play by the American dramatist and staged in the Berlin Volksbühne

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Düsel, *Westermanns Monatshefte*, CXXXV (1923-1924), 616. Hans Knudsen, in *Die Schöne Literatur*, XXV (February 15, 1924), 75, also concluded that this play should not have been produced in Germany.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in the *Boston Transcript*, December 15, 1923.

<sup>16</sup> Monty Jacobs, *Vossische Zeitung*, November 1, 1924.

<sup>17</sup> C. Hooper Trask, *New York World*, January 4, 1925.

<sup>18</sup> Monty Jacobs, *Vossische Zeitung*, November 1, 1924. The critics of such newspapers as *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger*, *Berliner Tageblatt*, and *Vorwärts* also gave highest praise to Klöpfer's acting in the role of Yank.

<sup>19</sup> Friedrich Düsel, *Westermanns Monatshefte*, CXXXVII (1924-1925), 534; Hans Knudsen, *Die Schöne Literatur*, XXV (December 15, 1924), 485.

a successful production of *The Moon of the Caribbees* (together with a short play, *Südseespiel*, by the German dramatist, Alfred Brust, which the critics did not like and which was compared most unfavorably with O'Neill's play). A year later, the production of *Desire Under the Elms* in the Lessingtheater in Berlin made no particular impression, except that two well-known actors appeared in the main roles—Paul Wegener as the greedy old New England farmer and Gerda Müller as his sensual young wife—and prevented the play from becoming a failure. In November 1927, *S. S. Glencairn* had its German première in the Essen Schauspielhaus, and, in the fall of 1928, *The Great God Brown* was produced for the first time in Cologne. Both plays found sympathetic and interested audiences. The reviewers, however, were divided in their evaluation of the artistic qualities of O'Neill's dramas. The consensus of opinion was that the "primitive" O'Neill, the author of *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape*, was preferable to the "literary" O'Neill, the writer of *Desire Under the Elms* and *The Great God Brown*.

The Berlin production of *Strange Interlude* on November 4, 1929, was a remarkable artistic event and, from all accounts, it was more successful than the reviews of the critics may permit us to think. The unusual length of the play, performed with no intermission for supper (which made the American production more pleasant to endure) and the over-deliberate pace set to insure clarity and emphasis wearied the first-night audience. They reacted by laughing in certain places, particularly during the scenes in which O'Neill employs the serious device of having his characters speak both their lines and the thoughts behind them. Later on, the director, Heinz Hilpert, cut the play considerably and increased its speed. On January 1, 1930, it was transferred from the Deutsches Künstlertheater to the Berliner Theater where the run reached its one-hundredth performance, something which may be considered a success in a country used to repertory theatres. *Strange Interlude*, according to its Berlin producer, Robert Klein, would have continued to attract large audiences had Elisabeth Bergner not insisted upon canceling her contract which called for one year beyond one-hundred nights.

Monty Jacobs, like some of the other critics, saw in *Strange Interlude* a mixture of Freud and Ibsen. He wondered about the "monologues of the subconscious mind," and called the play

interesting as an experiment but questionable as drama (at the same time advising his readers to see it).<sup>20</sup> Fritz Engel spoke of the play as a "drama picture, whose scene is laid in America but whose intellectual structure is European."<sup>21</sup> The kinship with European playwrights, peculiarly enough, seems to have bothered many critics. *Strange Interlude* to them was boring and outmoded, and, as one reviewer expressed it, only a pale reflection of the literary upheaval of bygone days—"a belated obeisance to the ghost of Ibsen."<sup>22</sup>

On one point all the critics seemed to agree—Elisabeth Bergner's art in the part of Nina. Miss Bergner, who had played Juliet to Francis Lederer's Romeo, under the direction of Max Reinhardt, had, because of her failure in the Shakespeare play, not appeared on the stage for almost a year. Nina helped to re-establish her reputation. All the critics were exuberant in their praise of the Bergner interpretation. Monty Jacobs, for instance, wrote: ". . . It is all perfection, the faultless taste of a woman who can play hysteria without becoming hysterical herself, the triumph of charm over a difficult part, a magic spell which spiritualizes all these destructive charms of the senses—in short, after our long privation, Elisabeth Bergner's return."<sup>23</sup> Engel waxed equally enthusiastic:

A brown-haired, troubled, sick girl, then a young mother who should not be one, then a lovely woman, then again a mother, then fading charms under a red wig, then an elderly lady, then a gentle old woman, and much more in the intervals—nine acts, nine roles, nine times a woman's love, suffering and hate-driven and driving through disillusionments and ecstasies; nine times the same person and yet another person, and always herself, with those eyes which do not need O'Neill's trick devices to say what must not be said; always with that child's face which can suddenly become tragic; always with that lovely charm which spreads a welcome cheerfulness; . . . It is Eve triumphant. We are willing to pardon O'Neill much. He gives occasion for great art in acting.<sup>24</sup>

In these praises of Miss Bergner's art lies the tacit admission that it was, after all, O'Neill who had written the tremendous and challenging part of Nina which helped Miss Bergner to her

<sup>20</sup> Monty Jacobs, "Elisabeth Bergners Wiederkehr," *Vossische Zeitung*, November 6, 1929.

<sup>21</sup> Fritz Engel, *Berliner Tageblatt*, November 5, 1929.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted by William L. McPherson in the New York *Herald-Tribune*, November 24, 1929.

<sup>23</sup> Monty Jacobs, *Vossische Zeitung*, November 6, 1929.

<sup>24</sup> Fritz Engel, *Berliner Tageblatt*, November 5, 1929. A similar opinion is expressed by Kurt Pinthus, *Westfälische Neueste Nachrichten*, November 1, 1929.

triumph. The German performance of *Strange Interlude* turned out to be the starting point of a lively discussion by literary critics on O'Neill and his place among modern writers. For this play lent itself—more than any other O'Neill play—to leisurely reflections over a question of play *versus* novel and other problems, as Engel suggested when he said that if

. . . the nine-acter should appear in book form we should see more clearly how much O'Neill has reflected over the opposition between morals and personality, between duty to others and preservation of one's own individuality, and also over the eternal outcropping of motherly and mother-in-law-like feelings.<sup>25</sup>

O'Neill's plays continued to be performed in various German cities, but by the time he was awarded the Nobel Prize he had become, like many others, *persona non grata* in the theatres of Hitler's Germany. The literary critics, however, went on discussing his merits and weaknesses. As late as 1938, a remarkable study of the American playwright<sup>26</sup> was published by Otto Koischwitz who viewed the American writer as the embodiment of the theatrical instinct in the America of the Twentieth Century, praised his devotion to the art of the theatre, and gave a very balanced picture of O'Neill's originality on the one hand and his dependence on European models on the other. Ironically enough, the Germans had to wait for almost ten years before they could again witness a play by the writer who, as Koischwitz put it, "revaluates all values [*Umwerter aller Werte*]" in the American drama.

After the collapse of the Nazi regime, American dramatists occupied an important place in the German theatres, and O'Neill—particularly with his *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *Ah, Wilderness!*—contributed to the revival of an international repertoire for which the German theatre under the Weimar Republic had been famous.

The Frankfurt première of *Mourning Becomes Electra*, on April 13, 1947, was hailed as the greatest dramatic event since the War, a direct link with the great theatre tradition of the pre-1933 era and an attempt to stabilize the cultural relations between the two countries. It was called a bold and grandiose performance; in the words of the drama critic of the *Wiesbade-*

<sup>25</sup> Fritz Engel, *Berliner Tageblatt*, November 5, 1929.

<sup>26</sup> Otto Koischwitz, *O'Neill* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1938).

ner *Kurier*, "six hours of human fate presented with ever new facets, again and again differently intensified." The audience, he maintained, found itself caught in the enormous mental and physical strain and tension the work demands of the actors.<sup>27</sup> Another reviewer commented on the tremendous scope of the play which extends

. . . from melodrama to tragedy, from crime story to psychologizing analysis of society, from sturdy naturalism to the mystically-surrealistic. There are murderers and ghosts, backstairs gossip and romanticism; age-old knowledge of human tangles; moments of pure tragedy next to theatrical drama. . . .<sup>28</sup>

There were those critics who pointed out the difference between O'Neill and the dramas of Thornton Wilder and Robert Ardrey "whose characteristics are the typical American optimism of life." O'Neill, in contrast, enmeshes man in "guilt and fear that lie like a curse on all the actions and passions of his heroes."<sup>29</sup> Naturally, O'Neill's debt to Strindberg and the Scandinavian drama as well as to Freud and Adler was recognized. The reviewer of the *Frankfurter Neue Presse* summed up the "European" elements of *Mourning Becomes Electra* when he spoke of the play as springing basically from European soil, but at the same time called it "something new even in Europe."<sup>30</sup> What seemed hard for the German critics to accept was the idea of Man relentlessly hunted and tortured by his own passions, and the absence of a true catharsis.

Interestingly enough, the reactions to the first production of *Mourning Becomes Electra* in the British Zone of Germany, which followed the one in Frankfurt by one day, were less enthusiastic. The Hamburg version had been cut extensively and it may very well be that it suffered by being as deficient as the American film in which, under the pressure of stressing only the high lights of the plot, the tension becomes so concentrated that the audience refuses to follow the actors in their unrelieved passions. More than one critic noted that excessive cutting presented a real problem for the producer of the play in the Hamburg Schauspielhaus. The removal of certain scenes, which an experienced practitioner of the stage like O'Neill had intro-

<sup>27</sup> Hans Kloss, *Wiesbadener Kurier*, April 14, 1947.

<sup>28</sup> Kyra Stromberg, *Kurier*, April 16, 1947.

<sup>29</sup> Karlheinz Holz, *Main Echo*, April 18, 1947.

<sup>30</sup> P. F. Weber, *Frankfurter Neue Presse*, April 14, 1947.

duced in order to give life to his psychoanalytical experiment, gave exactly the effect the American playwright had tried to avoid—"it created a clinical case study in psychology"<sup>31</sup> instead of a living play.

O'Neill continues to be included in the repertoires of many of the two hundred theatres in West Germany. And though he may not have affected greatly the course of modern German drama, he has enriched the German stage and provided roles for some outstanding German actors, such as Paul Wegener, Oskar Homolka, Heinrich George, Eugen Klöpfer, Rudolf Forster, Gerda Müller, and Elisabeth Bergner. O'Neill's name can hardly be erased from the annals of the German theatre of the past thirty years.

<sup>31</sup> Unsigned review in *Die Welt*, April 15, 1947.



# THE PRIZE COMEDY, LONDON 1844

by

ROSEMARY SPRAGUE

On August 22, 1843, after years of parliamentary wrangling, a bill was presented to Queen Victoria which abrogated the theatre patents of the 1660's. With a stroke of her pen, the Queen declared null and void the law which, for one hundred and eighty-three years, had restricted the production of English classic tragedy and comedy to Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and, in the off season, to the "little theatre in the Haymarket." It was a piece of legislation long overdue. The two theatres, which the patents had been designed to maintain as "permanent Temples of Native Drama,"<sup>1</sup> were no longer fulfilling that function. Opera had taken over Covent Garden, and Drury Lane, built and rebuilt to an enormous capacity after successive fires, could not cover expenses by performances of *Richard III*. Over the years, the Drury Lane management had been forced to add trained horse acts, ballets, and mechanical spectacles to bring in customers with the classic pieces being curtailed accordingly. This displeased the Drury star, William Macready, who, after numerous financial and aesthetic battles with the adamant theatrical manager, Alfred Bunn, finally resigned. It was this tragedy more than anything else which shocked both the press and public into realizing that so ridiculous and untenable a state of affairs must continue no longer. The jubilation at the Garrick Club on that August evening must have been enormous, for, to the long-suffering profession, it had been a gold letter day.

Critics, inclined to be supercilious about the Nineteenth Century generally, are fond of remarking that the abolition of the patents had little effect on the drama, because between 1843 and 1860 no new theatres were built. This statement really requires no comment beyond a note to the effect that a building boom is not a prerequisite to improved artistic quality. There were sixteen theatres in London in 1843, ample for the demand at the time. Furthermore, each one of them had long been asso-

<sup>1</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, June 17, 1843.

ciated with a particular type of play catering to its own peculiar audience, a fact which, if known, is seldom taken into consideration in criticisms of the Victorian theatre. The playgoer knew that at the Adelphi he would see melodrama starring Madame Celeste whose versatility, particularly in scenes which required her to appear disguised as a man, was highly appreciated. At the Surrey or the Coburg, he would find "melodrama of low life," out-and-out blood and thunder, where he could hiss the villain and encourage the heroine to his heart's content. If he contemplated a stag evening, he might drop in at Astley's, where the bareback riders and trapeze artists were decorative as well as daring; but if he were escorting a young lady, he would almost certainly take her to the Olympic to watch the genteel Madame Vestris in a light comedy "from the French," guaranteed neither to embarrass nor offend. The Strand Theatre was uniquely devoted to burlesque—not as produced by the Brothers Minsky, but travesties or parodies on current theatrical successes in which men took women's roles and operatic arias were set to popular lyrics. In the hands of a J. Robinson Planché they were often exceedingly witty and brilliant, never offensive, and, read in the context of their times, showed considerable satiric "point."

It would have been over optimistic to expect that these theatres, having built up a steady clientele, would now change to Shakespeare simply because Parliament had made him legal. When Samuel Phelps, a few months after the abrogation, organized a company and leased Sadler's Wells, a theatre notorious for its low entertainment enjoyed by an equally notorious audience, the predictions of failure were many. Great was the surprise when Phelps managed to continue for some eighteen years to bring the plays of Shakespeare and other classics to this self-same audience that developed into more loyal supporters of the "native drama" than those of the West End. Other managers, however, were not so intrepid. Phelps, after all, had been "at leisure" for some time and had little to lose. But the manager of the Adelphi would doubtless have greeted with sardonic amusement a suggestion of substituting a performance of *Love's Labour's Lost* for his October opening when his elaborate production of Edward Stirling's *The Bohemians, or the Rogues of Paris* was already in rehearsal. Playwrights, too, who had managed to make a living, however uncomfortably, by turning out farces, melo-

dramas, domestic dramas, and burlesques, could hardly be expected to change their styles overnight because the so-called "minors" could now produce five-act tragedies in blank verse. Thus it was only natural that the 1843-1844 season would show little change in dramatic fare.

It was, in fact, a worse season than usual. Drury Lane was notably unsuccessful and Covent Garden failed to open its doors. A most interesting diagnosis of the health of the "Fabulous Invalid" in the spring of 1844 is provided by Planché's extravaganza, *The Drama at Home*, produced at the Haymarket on April 18. The curtain rose on "The Drama, in wretched condition . . . gazing on her ruined sons and daughters," who are described as "Dramatis Personae in want of situations as well as dialogue." She is interrupted by Mr. Puff, who takes her on a tour of the London theatres. A rather clever sequence follows, in which the various theatres are represented by a sample of the kind of play found at each one: a few operatic arias from Covent Garden, a ballet from Astley's, and a spectacle, "The Destruction of Pompeii," from Drury Lane. Drama, dismayed, asks where the actors are. Puff tells her that no one really cares for acting nowadays, but obligingly takes her to one of the minor theatres to witness a scene from *The Merchant of Venice*. Drama is amazed to find Shakespeare being produced there, and Puff explains:

I say you're free to act where'er you please;  
No longer pinioned by the Patentees  
Need our immortal Shakespeare mute remain  
Fixed on the portico of Drury Lane,  
Or the Nine muses mourn the Drama's fall  
Without relief on Covent Garden's wall.  
Sheridan now at Islington may shine,  
Marylebone echo Marlowe's mighty line,  
Otway may raise the waters Lambeth yields,  
And Farquhar sparkle in St. George's Fields;  
Wycherly fluster a Whitechapel pit,  
And Congreve wake all Middlesex to wit!

Drama exclaims jubilantly, "Oh joyful day! Then I may flourish still." But a moment later, she adds:

Am I the better for this promise fair?  
I see no rising drama worth the name,  
And now the law is surely not to blame.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> James Robinson Planché, "The Drama at Home," *Extravaganzas*, eds. T. F. Dillon-Crocker & Stephen Tucker (London: S. French, 1897).

This was the opinion of most theatregoers of the time. But, behind the scenes at the Haymarket, forces were already at work which would ultimately reverse this pessimistic appraisal.

Early in the autumn of 1843, Ben Webster, manager of the Haymarket, had announced a contest to stimulate interest and encourage competition among the discouraged playwrights who claimed that they were unable to get a hearing for their work. For writing the best modern comedy of English life and manners, the winner would receive a meticulous production of his play by the foremost company in London, and £500 in gold. It was an astounding offer, greatly commended for its generosity, and for weeks literary Bohemia talked of nothing else.

Ninety-eight plays were submitted, and the judges began their deliberations. Webster served as chairman of the Committee which included Charles Young and Charles Kemble, directors of the Haymarket; G. P. R. James, the novelist; and Thomas Searle, the playwright. The drama columns agreed with Webster that this group formed a wholly competent panel, but, as announcements were promised and then withdrawn over a considerable length of time, *The Illustrated London News* finally asked impatiently on March 4, 1844:

When is our legitimate—our Prize Comedy to appear? or, out of the aggregate number presented—one hundred twenty-seven as we have heard, is there not *one* good one?

A week later, on March 9, the winner was announced: *Quid Pro Quo*, or *the Day of Dupes*, by Mrs. Charles Gore.

The announcement was greeted with some surprise. Mrs. Gore was one of the "singular anomalies" cited by Koko on his little list, a lady novelist. She belonged to what has been aptly termed "The Silver Fork School," and she wrote so voluminously that many of her books had to be issued anonymously, lest the public grow weary and repudiate so many by the same author. Two novels were once made to oppose each other in the same week. "Prodigious must be the arts of the bibliographic craft, by which a woman can thus be turned into her own rival,"<sup>3</sup> R. H. Horne comments reverentially, and certainly a writer who had seventy three-volume novels to her credit deserves commendation for her energy, if nothing else. Moreover, though her plots were contrived and commonplace, she nevertheless managed to

<sup>3</sup> R. H. Horne, *A New Spirit of the Age* (New York 1844), p. 138.

depict with uncanny accuracy and realism the society and manners of her time. She was extremely popular with what was termed the "backstairs" population, which devoured omnivorously anything pertaining to high life; and when George IV called her *Manners of the Day* "the best bred and most amusing novel published in my remembrance,"<sup>4</sup> the drawing rooms of Belgravia were also proud to claim her.

The selection of Mrs. Gore's play as the winner occasioned immediate criticism. Though the rules had not so stated specifically, it was tacitly assumed that professional playwrights would consider themselves ineligible, and Mrs. Gore not only wrote novels but had had some plays produced as well. Her *School for Coquettes* had run for thirty nights in 1831. But she did not consider herself a professional playwright and neither, apparently, did the Committee. On June 18, 1844, society crowded into the Haymarket expecting to see a play similar in style to the novels they had so enjoyed. Webster himself and John Baldwin Buckstone headed a brilliant cast; there were new costumes and *décor*. In fact, everything possible had been done to insure a success, which made the play's utter and complete failure all the worse.

The audience expressed its opinion that evening, the dailies the following morning, and the magazines four days later. *The Illustrated London News* of June 22, 1844 called the play,

. . . incoherent and plotless . . . a chance medley of meeting characters, distinguished throughout by the lowest, most witless dialogue ever spoken on the stage.

*The Athenaeum* of the same date, in more judicious tone, observed:

The aim of the author's satire is directed against the prevailing vices and follies of the day, but they are exhibited with such glaring exaggeration and coarseness that the picture is at once false and offensive.

The battle raged furiously, and, finally, Mrs. Gore, in a spirited rebuttal, accused her critics of damning the play solely because of "the fact of her sex,"<sup>5</sup> and insisted that *Quid Pro Quo* was no worse than hundreds of other plays acted every year to great applause (which was, incidentally, quite true). *Punch* entered the controversy with a letter of apology, purportedly written by

<sup>4</sup> Article on "Gore, Catherine Grace Frances Moody" in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

<sup>5</sup> "Mrs. Charles Gore," *New Monthly Magazine*, XCI (1852), p. 158.

Charles Kemble to Ben Webster, in which Kemble said, "Not a hiss escaped the audience on the first night that the committee did not honestly appropriate half the sibilation for themselves," and, had they been called before the curtain, "every man of them was ready to suffer the results of his responsibility, whether administered from the galleries in the shape of nuts, apples, oranges, or gingerbeer bottles."<sup>6</sup> *Quid Pro Quo* played a tempestuous three weeks, and then was permanently withdrawn.

It is fortunate, despite the adverse publicity, that the play did see publication,<sup>7</sup> for in a sense it represents the culmination of a style in comedy writing which had held sway in the theatre from the time of Sheridan. Mrs. Gore, instead of writing in the successfully realistic style of her novels and recording actual life and manners of her time, which she had excellent opportunity to observe, went straight back to the Eighteenth Century for her plot and characters. Her hero, Henry Grigson, fancies himself in love with his cousin, Ellen Grigson, whose parents had recently made a fortune in trade. (This is the only "modern" note in the entire play.) Ellen's father has been persuaded by the Earl of Hunsdon to leave his simple home and take a large estate near Hunsdon Hall. This done, he decides that Ellen should marry Lord Belmont, the Earl's son, an insufferable boor. To woo Ellen, Henry pretends to be an earl, introducing himself as his college friend, Sir Algernon Fitz-Urse. This disguise puts considerable strain on the audience's credulity for they are asked to believe that Ellen's father would not recognize his own nephew.

Ellen, however, is secretly engaged to a Mr. Rivers. He, of course, is also in disguise; the audience does not discover his identity until Act III and those onstage remain in ignorance until the final curtain. Henry, finding Ellen lost to him, recovers quickly, and begins to enjoy himself very much at Hunsdon Castle by flirting with Lady Mary, the Earl's daughter. Lady Mary returns Henry's interest, but he soon finds himself skating on thin ice. It so happens that the real Sir Algernon is the son of Lady Hunsdon's best friend, and milady constantly asks embarrassing questions. There are divers complications—the

<sup>6</sup> *Punch*, June 22, 1844.

<sup>7</sup> *Dick's Standard Plays*, No. 766.

Earl's election campaign and some amateur theatricals presided over by a character named Sippet, who is given to bad jokes and execrable puns. There is also a tense, very tense, moment when half the players assume that the mysterious Mr. Rivers is going to marry Lady Mary, and, in order to plead his cause with Ellen, he must disguise himself as the third violinist in the orchestra engaged to play for the theatricals. Henry's masquerade is discovered, and he is forced to spend a night in jail, but love is stronger than iron bars, and he emerges triumphantly to marry Lady Mary. Ellen is paired off with Rivers who finally confesses to being the nephew and sole heir of Lord Mordaunt.

The dialogue matches the play's plot to perfection. Those attending the première in anticipation of enjoying the banter for which Mrs. Gore was famous, were sadly disappointed. Her lines are artificial and pretentious when not plain stupid. A few samples will serve:

SIPPET: (*speaking of the Countess*) In fashionable parlance, my dear fellow, a lady—any literary lady—is a blue who is not deeply read.

BELMONT: (*after insulting Henry*) Bear and forbear, like the bear you are, sir.

HENRY: (*in his disguise as Sir Algernon, answering a question about his ecclesiastical uncle's see*) I don't know about His Lordship's See, but it blew great guns in the Bay of Biscay t'other day.

And for emotional moments:

ELLEN: (*taking leave of Rivers*) In a few hours, then, we shall meet and, amid the confusion of their private theatricals, enjoy opportunities for unmolested conversation. Here, I am in momentary terror of interruption.

This last was not intended as burlesque, either!

The question is: why did the Committee, all of them men of taste, and two of them, Webster and Searle, practising playwrights, select this play? Lacking the other entries we cannot assume that *Quid Pro Quo* was the best—indeed, there were dark hints at the time that it was not. The answer, however, is not hard to find when one knows the drama to be the most conservative of all the arts, and that theatrical producers are equally so. To this day, a producer, who is willing to relinquish the tried and accepted old for the new which may fail, is rare. The same obtained in 1844. We need only note that three members of the Prize Committee were connected with the Haymarket's manage-

ment to see that nothing too novel could have been acceptable to them.

Amid all the excitement, only one critic recognized this obvious fact. George Henry Lewes, the twenty-seven-year-old critic of the *Westminster Review*, based his criticism on his own axiom that "nothing but the positive test of acting can decide the merit of a play." In his article on the Prize Comedy in the *Westminster Review* of September 1844, he continued succinctly:

It appears to us that the committee looked at the comedies with reference to the stage—not with reference to wit, humour, character, or originality. *Quid Pro Quo* was pronounced to be the nearest approach to the stage ideal; that is to say, what theatrical people conceive will ensure success. It is safe—very safe; contains no new characters, no new motives, no new situations, therefore nothing experimental, nothing dangerous. The plot is old, the situations are old, the characters are old, the jokes are very, very old.

But the audience had grown weary of pseudo-Sheridan brittle-brilliance. The breaking of the patents had been widely heralded as the first step toward improving the quality of the drama, and the Committee had not taken this into consideration. They had not realized that the more sophisticated playgoer might have wanted, indeed definitely expected, judging from private and public comment, something new, fresh, and unhackneyed. Nor, and this is even more important, did they recognize the desires of the new audience—the great Middle Class which had come into its own with the Industrial Revolution—which took no delight in witty dialogue for its own sake. Nourished on the "drama," melo- and domestic, of the minors, this new group, now financially able to patronize the West End, still insisted on a good story with a solid moral point, and, to be sure, they did not find it in Mrs. Gore's play. Doubtless, the Committee had been guided by the thought that £500 was a great deal of money, and feared to depart from the old. But their choice did not pass the final, omnipotent tribunal—the audience. *Quid Pro Quo* was hooted off the stage, and, with it, all future eighteenth-century pastiches.

It would be pleasant to be able to say that the play's failure marked the end of what Shaw caustically dubbed the "comedy of no manners," but, unfortunately, the theatre does not function this way. Sheridan continued to have his admirers and imitators,



even as tragedy took to Shakespeare. Side by side with these, however, a new school of playwriting gradually emerged, and the comedies of Richard Brinsley Peake and Robert Bell, two writers who clung to the eighteenth-century models, were never again as well received, critically or at the box office, after June 18, 1844. In the autumn of that year, the Haymarket produced *Old Heads and Young Hearts*, a sentimental comedy by a twenty-three-year-old Irishman named Dion Boucicault, who four years earlier had won critical acclaim for the eighteenth-century imitation, *London Assurance*—early evidence of his ability to adapt his pen to the prevailing audience mode. The following spring, Douglas Jerrold, who also formerly had followed the "classic" pattern, wrote *Time Works Wonders*, in which he combined a good dramatic plot, a solid moral point, with brilliant social satire. Slowly the new trend took hold. In the Fifties, Edmund Falconer and Tom Taylor wrote a number of good comedies of contemporary London life, with great emphasis on the risen Middle Class. And, in the Sixties, Tom Robertson brought to the stage the beginnings of modern realistic comedy as we know it.

For Robertson's *Caste*, which had its première on April 6, 1867, was not the result of genius toiling in a vacuum, any more than the "new drama" of the Nineties sprang full grown from the brains of Pinero and Shaw. These men could never have written their plays had not Robertson first broken the ground, and, in turn, Robertson could not have written his, nor have had them accepted, had not playwrights for more than twenty years been gradually discarding the artifice and imitation of the old accepted standards. The night that *Quid Pro Quo* was catcalled to defeat was quickly forgotten, but in the light of what followed, the performance of the Prize Comedy was of great significance and the play itself an important theatrical document. The theatre stands greatly in debt to Ben Webster's contest, to the Prize Committee, and, most of all, to Mrs. Charles Gore, the much disparaged and now neglected winner.

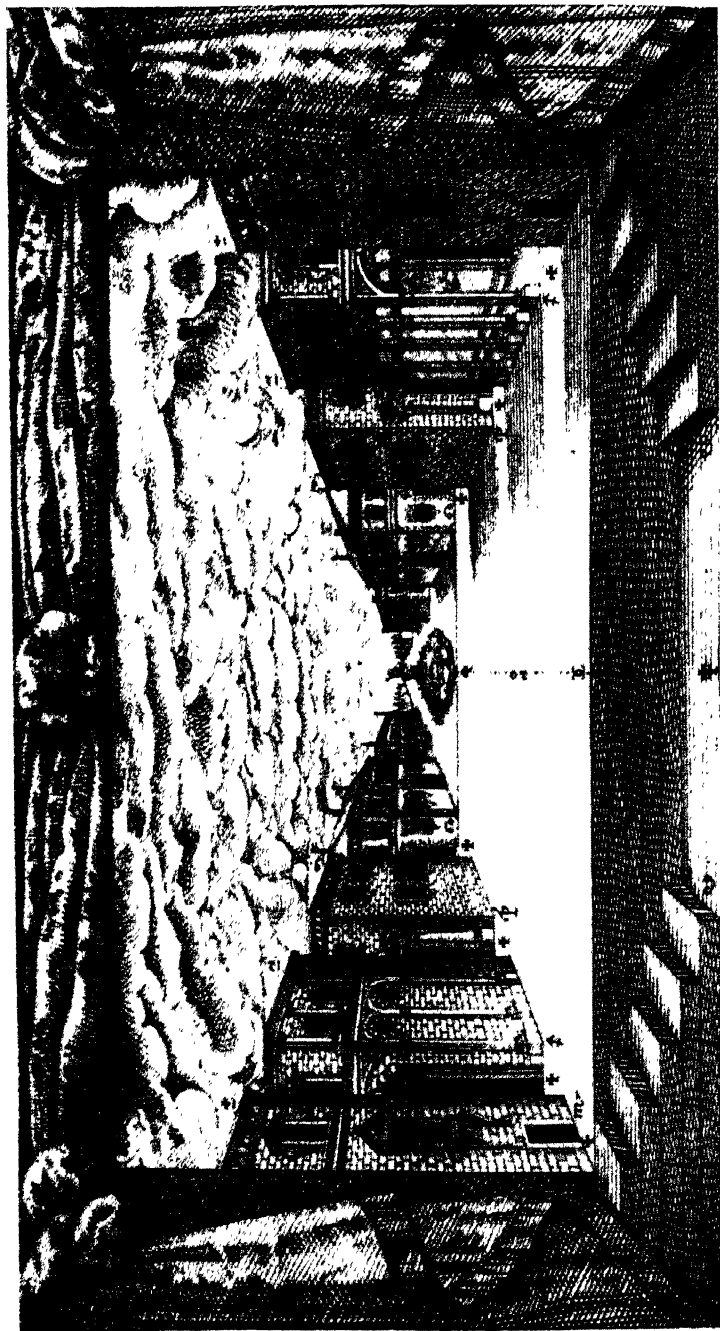


Plate 1. Furttenbach's Sketch for a Street Scene Designed for His Theatre in Ulm,  
Germany.

(*Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*, Plate 12)

# THE FURTTENBACH THEATRE IN ULM

by

A. M. NAGLER

Joseph Furttenbach (1591-1667), the builder of the theatre in Ulm, Germany in 1640-1641, was an architect, engineer, mechanic, pyrotechnist, and writer on these and allied subjects. His father had wished him to pursue a commercial career, and, with this aim in mind, sent him to Italy. There the young Furttenbach discovered that he preferred the profession of architect. The exact dates of his sojourn in Italy are not available, but it is known that he left Germany in his early twenties, while there was still peace in Europe, and returned home after the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1618. In his first book, *Newes Itinerarium Italiae* published at Ulm in 1627, he left a record of what he had observed during his years of apprenticeship. Being interested in all aspects of architecture and engineering, he mentioned theatrical performances only in passing. His account of the Medici Theatre is tantalizingly brief,<sup>1</sup> and much more space is devoted to a description of a *Sepoltura Santa*, which his teacher, Giulio Parigi, had set up in the Pitti Palace on Good Friday.<sup>2</sup> Also in 1627, he had a treatise published on firearms, gun powder, inflammable compositions, and pyrotechnics entitled *Beschreybung einer neuen Büchsenmeisterey*. By 1628, his *Architectura Civilis* was in print, containing a special section on the theatre (*Von Prospectiven*). Having thus dealt with civil architecture, Furttenbach, in successive publications, took up the subjects of naval and military architecture. In 1640, his *Architectura Recreationis* was published. In the *Architectura Civilis*, he is very vague as to the dimensions of the stage and the mechanism of its equipment, but the *Architectura Recreationis* gives detailed specifications,<sup>3</sup> making it possible for us to reconstruct the playhouse Furttenbach had had in mind. Moreover, it contains reproductions of his designs for four front cur-

<sup>1</sup> *Newes Itinerarium Italiae*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 81-83.

<sup>3</sup> *Architectura Recreationis*, pp. 59-70.

tains.<sup>4</sup> The section, *Von Scienia di Comedia*, is of additional interest because it describes three sets echoing the designs which Giulio Parigi prepared for the *Giudizio di Paride*, a pastoral produced in Florence in 1608 in connection with the wedding festivities at the Medici Court. Furttenbach did not witness this production, but he secured a copy of the etchings by Parigi and Remigio Cantagallina just as Inigo Jones, during his second visit to Italy (from the spring of 1613 to the autumn of 1614), had familiarized himself with Parigi's designs.

In 1663, Furttenbach's *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel* was published, a universal "Mirror of Art," with chapters on arithmetic, geometry, geography, astronomy, mechanics, aqueducts, pyrotechnics, and military, naval, and civil architecture. One chapter contains Furttenbach's playful project for an octagonal recreation hall, equipped with no less than four stages with the feasting spectators seated on a turntable in the center.<sup>5</sup> Most rewarding, however, for the theatre historian is the chapter on *Prospettiva* in which Furttenbach gives a detailed account of the theatre he built in the city of Ulm where he had become municipal architect in 1631.

The Ulm playhouse was used for school performances by the students of Rector Johannes Konrad Merchius. In their first production, a Moses play, in 1641, one hundred and twenty students participated, and the performance lasted six hours. In 1650, the group produced a play whose theme was the place of Christianity during the reigns of the Emperors Carus, Diocletianus, Galerius, Constantius, Maxentius, and Constantinus the Great. Furttenbach indicates that other plays were given—a Jonah play, an Abraham, and the birth of Christ—but no dates are available for them.

Furttenbach placed his theatre in a hall which originally had been part of a monastery whose monks' parlor had been converted into a granary after the secularization. The spectators entered the building through a gate, 12 feet in width,<sup>6</sup> in the western façade. From the foyer on the ground floor (*vnderste Vorläubelin*: length, 45'; width, 8½') they reached their seats by

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Plate 20.

<sup>5</sup> *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*, pp. 255-261.

<sup>6</sup> Furttenbach gives his dimensions in *Werckschuch*, but in the present study, for brevity's sake, the English foot or its symbol is used. The author realizes that the *Württemberg Schuch* was shorter than the English foot, equalling 0.286 meters or 0.939 feet.

ascending one of the staircases provided in the corners of the entrance hall.

The auditorium consisted of 40 benches (*sessiones*: length, 37'; width, 1¼') which rose on a sloping platform. Each bench was to accommodate 20 spectators so that 800 persons could be seated. The actual capacity, however, was 1,000, for the aisles (width, 4'), to the left and to the right of the benches, allowed for 200 standees. Furttenbach suggested that the common people (*gemeine Volck*) be admitted only after the carriage trade (*die Vornembsten*) had been seated.

In front of the first row of seats there was the level part of the auditorium. It had a depth of 3' and was railed off against the "front pit" (*vordere Graben*) by a parapet (*Brustwand, Brüstlin, Galleria*). On this horizontal section of the platform 16 chairs could be placed for the guests of honor (*die Principales sampt dero Frawenzimmer, so wol die junge Herrschafft*).

Furttenbach also provided for the ventilation of the auditorium. Not only were there windows that could be opened if needed but also vents in the roof through which the exhausted air could escape.<sup>7</sup> Furttenbach notes that in Italy, where expenses were ignored by the princely patrons of the theatre, "many small holes" were made in the ceiling of the auditorium, through which perfumed water was sprayed upon the spectators "though only over the heads of the most illustrious ladies and of young people of high rank."<sup>8</sup> On warm summer nights such a perfumed shower was highly appreciated.

The front pit (length, 45'; width, 10') began behind the parapet. This *vordere Graben*, which corresponds to our orchestra pit,<sup>9</sup> had a double function: to prevent the spectators from coming too close to the perspective painting on the stage and to receive the curtain (*fuora, Vmbhang*) which, after the fashion of the Roman *aulaeum*, fell at the beginning of the performance to the sound of trumpets and kettle drums.<sup>10</sup> But while the ancient Romans seem to have used but one curtain, Furttenbach recognizes the possibility of using as many as six, one for each

<sup>7</sup> Mannhaffter *Kunst-Spiegel*, pp. 112, 113.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>9</sup> In his *Mannhaffter Kunst-Spiegel* Furttenbach does not envisage the use of the front pit by musicians, but in his *Architectura Recreationis* (cf. pp. 64, 70) he places the instrumentalists in the front pit.

<sup>10</sup> Nicola Sabbattini, in his *Pratica di fabricar scene e machine ne' teatri* (Ravenna 1638), Pk. I, Chapt. 37, evidences his knowledge of both the falling curtain and the roller curtain, giving preference to the latter as it is bound to be less untidy.

act of a six-act play.<sup>11</sup> After they have fallen from behind the "upper front screen" (*vorderer oberer Schirm*), they remain in the pit. This cornice (length, 45'; width, 4¼'), for which Furttenbach proposed a decoration with foliage and fruits, was mounted from the ceiling perpendicularly above the parapet.

Furttenbach's stage was provided with a proscenium frame, the uprights of which measured 30' by 5½'. Along the ceiling, the two vertical side pieces were connected by a horizontal screen (*hinterer Schirm*: length, 34'; width, 4¼'). The frame was painted so as to give the impression of a curtain drawn in Italian fashion. The size of the proscenium opening was 20' by 34'.

The substage area was hidden from the spectators by planking which rose 5¾' from the bottom of the front pit. On these boards, two stairs were painted in perspective and seemed to lead from the corners of the stage into the front pit. A planking of 5' would have been sufficient to screen the substage activities, but ¾' was added to shield the footlights arranged along the edge of the stage.

The main stage (*Hauptbrucken, Scena*) measured 45' by 20' in the clear. Its slanting floor rose 2' from the footlights to the lower shutter beam—a distance of 20'. Accordingly, the substage area was 5' in height under the footlights and 7' under the shutters. The lower shutter beam (width, 1'), which marked the rear end of the main stage, had four grooves in which the four shutter pairs were to slide. A correspondingly grooved upper beam held the shutters securely in line. Each shutter pair consisted of two canvas-covered wooden frames, both 9' wide and 10' high.<sup>12</sup> A crosspiece in the lower shutter beam marked the center of the stage and prevented the shutters from sliding beyond their assigned area. On the four pairs of back shutters, running in smooth grooves one behind the other, four different scenes were painted. The second scene was revealed after the first pair of flats had been removed from sight by two stagehands who pulled on the leather straps attached like handles to the shutter frames.<sup>13</sup> When all four shutter pairs had been withdrawn, the spectators looked into the rear-stage area.

<sup>11</sup> In his *Architectura Recreationis*, on Plate 20, Furttenbach gives four sample illustrations for such curtains which can be either dropped into the front pit or drawn to the sides (*geheult zucken*).

<sup>12</sup> In the *Architectura Recreationis* (p. 68), the shutters are 18' high.

<sup>13</sup> In his *Architectura Recreationis* (p. 66), Furttenbach mentions counterweighted shutters. His method of changing the back shutters is identical with that of Sabbattini's method of opening the *prospettiva di mezo* (cf. Sabbattini, *op. cit.*, Bk. II, Chapt. 13).

Furttenbach called his rear stage the back pit (*hintere Graben*). It began at the shutter beam and extended over a distance of 12' to the rear wall of the stage.<sup>14</sup> When this area was used as a pit, its depth was 7' (length, 45'; width, 12'), but when the pit was covered with boards and turned into a rear stage, the operation yielded an extreme depth of 32'. The *hintere Graben* was used as an actual pit for sea scenes featuring the appearance of ships and sea monsters. When converted into a rear stage, however, the area could be made to represent Pharaoh's throne room, the Shepherds' field near Bethlehem, or the desert at the foot of Mount Sinai. Furttenbach suggested that the boards used to plank the rear pit should not be too heavy to allow for fairly easy removal.

The rear stage(or pit) ended with the stage wall, behind which there was the dressing room for the youthful actors. A staircase in the northeast corner of the building led to the stage door.

This being the allocation of space, what were the arrangements made for the scenic transformation of the stage? Shutters, painted in perspective, were no mechanical problem when it came to scene changes. But the scenic illusion had to be enhanced by side scenes, and here Furttenbach had to make a choice from three possibilities which had already been tested by the middle of the Seventeenth Century.

When Furttenbach was equipping the school theatre in Ulm, a century had passed since Sebastiano Serlio had advocated the use of angle wings, a method clearly too stationary and rigid to recommend itself to Furttenbach. He also must have regarded as clumsy Sabbattini's proposals for changing the pictorial aspects of Serlio's angle wings.<sup>15</sup> However, in 1638, Sabbattini offered a better method of changing scenery: the triangular revolving prism, the *periaktos* of the Greeks. It was this method

<sup>14</sup> In contrast with the stage described in the *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*, the stage of the *Architectura Recreationis* has the rear pit immediately in front of the stage shutters, an arrangement Furttenbach may have seen in the Medici Theatre. In 1589, Bernardo Buontalenti could not have staged the fourth or fifth intermezzi without the help of such a pit in front of the shutter beam. But Buontalenti also needed a pit behind the back shutter, and Furttenbach in the *Architectura Recreationis* suggests that in cases where a larger rear pit is necessary the floor of the dressing room behind the shutters can be removed and used as a pit.

<sup>15</sup> For Sabbattini's method see translation of Bk. II, Chaps. 5 and 6 of his *Pratica* in A. M. Nagler, *Sources of Theatrical History* (New York 1952), pp. 90-92. Serlio, to be sure, had not changed his standardized scenes, and Sabbattini's first and second methods represented, in spite of their unwieldiness, still the best possible solutions for the transformation of angle wings.





5 were placed in pairs, the first pair 12' high, the second 9'. For the purpose of clarification, we shall distinguish between main and secondary prisms: the *periaktoi* 1, 3, and 5 will be considered as main prisms, 2 and 4 as secondary. Though the heights of the prisms diminished as they receded from the footlights, the widths of the rectangles of which they were made remained the same, as each prism, regardless of its position, consisted of one rectangle with a width of 4', of another of  $3\frac{1}{2}'$ , and a third of 2'. When the *periaktoi* were in their first position the widest sides of the main prisms were all placed along the chief vanishing line drawn on the stage floor with the help of a snap line, while all the secondary prisms (2 and 4) had their widest sides of 4' placed parallel to the footlights.

When, backstage, a small bell sounded the signal, the stagehands turned the ten *periaktoi* into their second position in which the main prisms (1, 3, and 5) had their sides of middle width ( $3\frac{1}{2}'$ ) parallel to the footlights and the secondary ones (2 and 4) exposed their sides of middle width ( $3\frac{1}{2}'$ ) in an arrangement along an imaginary vanishing line running parallel, at a distance of  $3\frac{1}{2}'$ , with the chief vanishing line on the stage floor. In this second position, prisms 2 and 3 as well as 4 and 5 formed an obtuse angle.

Each of the three-sided prisms, then, had a large, a medium, and a small canvas surface. In the first position, the largest surfaces of all 10 prisms were shown to the audience. While the first set was on display, the next set, painted on medium-sized canvasses, was being prepared backstage, and at a given signal eight stagehands accomplished the transformation with lightning speed, one being posted at prism 1, another at 2 and 3, a third at 4 and 5, and a fourth at one half of the back shutter, with the same number of "grips" placed on the other side of the stage. When the bell rang, the stagehand at prism 1 would simply turn it into its second position; the stagehands posted at 2, 3, and 4, 5 would seize their assigned prism pairs by finger grooves (*ingeschnittene Handhöbinnen*) and turn the prisms, and the stagehand at the shutter half would pull the flat back with the aid of a leather strap.<sup>19</sup> In this second position, all the medium-sized canvasses faced the audience.

<sup>19</sup> In his *Architectura Recreationis* (pp. 67, 69), Furttenbach has the pivotal shaft (*Wellbaum*) of each prism reach through the stage floor into the substage area, where they are placed in sockets (*Pfannen*). A crossbar (*Tremmel*) is provided for each shaft so that the prisms can be turned by the stagehands in the substage area.

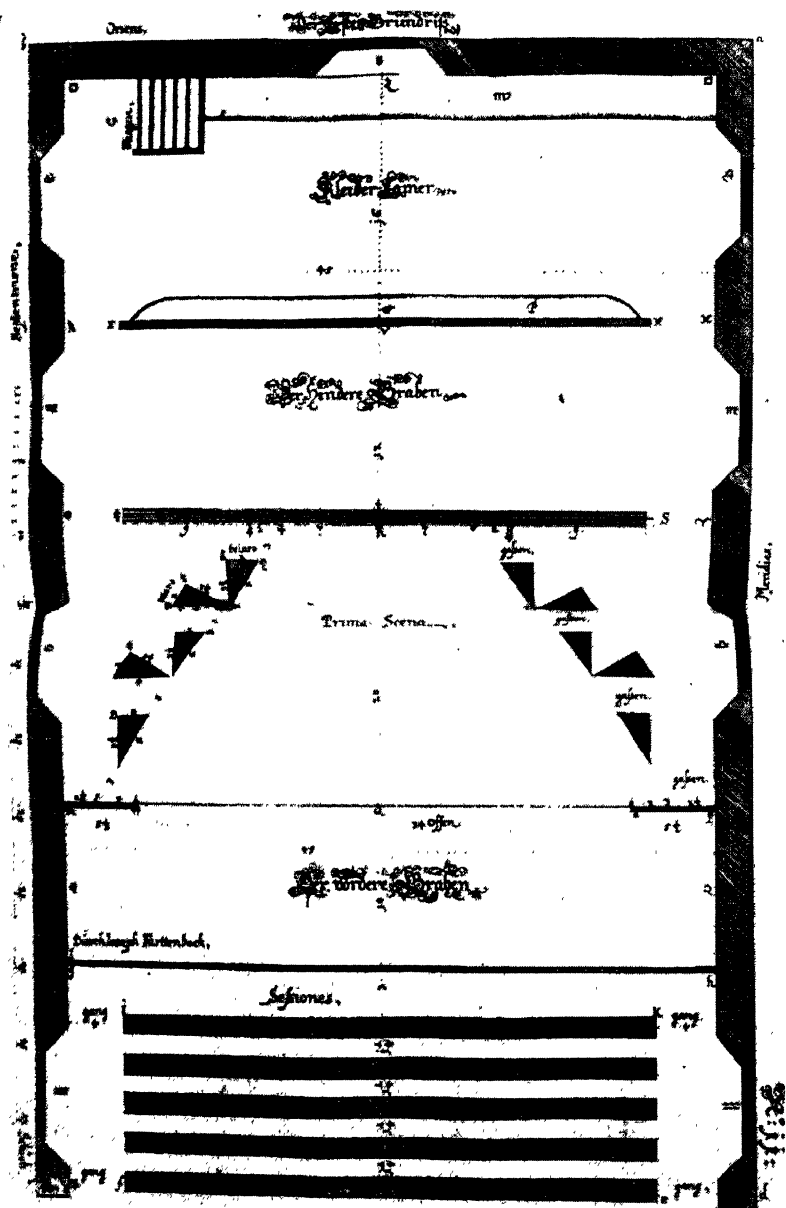


Plate 2. Ground Plan of Furttenbach's Stage in Ulm.  
 The *periaktoi* are in their first position. Five rows of benches of the auditorium are shown at the bottom.

(Mannhaffter Kunst-Spiegel, Plate 12)

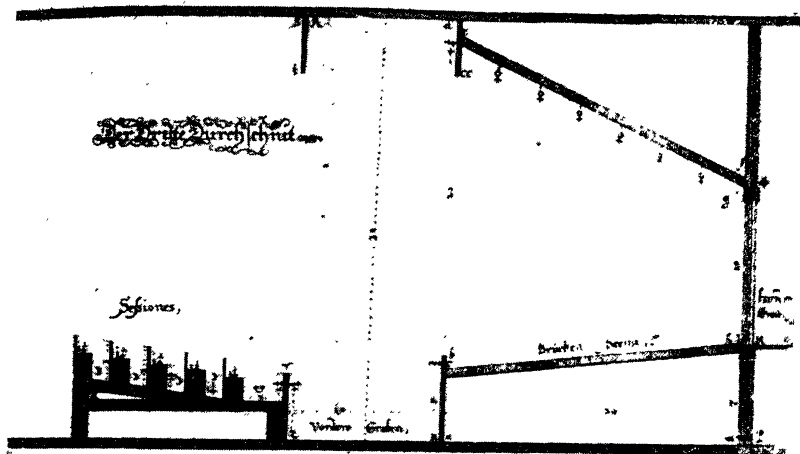


Plate 3. Cross Section of Furttenbach's Ulm Theatre.  
Five rows of benches, the front pit, and the sloping stage are shown.  
(Upper part of Plate 11½ in *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*)

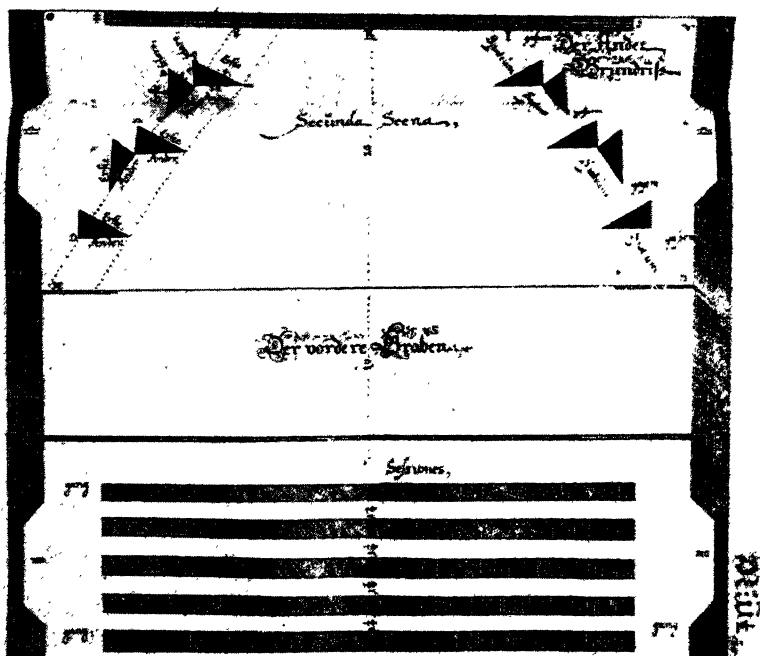


Plate 4. Ground Plan of the Main Stage of Furttenbach's Ulm Theatre.  
The *periaktoi* are in their second position.  
(Lower part of Plate 11½ in *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*)

While the largest surfaces were turned off stage, new canvas frames were mounted on the *periaktoi* frames,<sup>20</sup> so that, when the time came for the next transformation, the prisms could simply be returned to their original positions but now exhibiting the set for Act III. During this act, the medium-sized canvasses were made ready for Act IV, and so forth. In this manner an unlimited number of scene changes could be carried out as long as there was the same number of back shutters. The smallest rectangles of the prisms (width, 2') were never used as carriers of scenery.

On Plate 12 of the *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*, Furttenbach reproduced two scenes he painted for Ulm. One is a street scene *alla fiorentina* of houses built of red freestone with white dividing lines. The doors and window frames are gray, as are the clouds which, however, are touched up with red. The second scene is a formal garden with a series of trellised pergolas with a grotto in the background. The blue of the sky shines through the green of the foliage.

In both their first and second positions, the *periaktoi* left passages which Furttenbach designated as "streets" (*Gassen, spatia*). Through these four, or rather, eight streets, the actors made their entrances and exits. Moreover, in these street areas there were some traps (*Bruckengräblin*) in the stage floor, which seem to have been simple contrivances with hinged trap covers that could be released by removing two bolts in the "cellar."

There were many occasions for the use of traps.<sup>21</sup> In the *Jonah* play, the gourd, which shaded the Minor Prophet as he was sitting to the east of Nineveh, came up through a two-foot-wide trap. One side of the bowerlike arrangement was painted with green foliage, the other side was all withered and in brown decay. The bower was turned by means of a pole in the substage area after the Lord had sent the worm and the vehement east wind which robbed Jonah of his umbrage. Finally, the bower was lowered through the trap, and the hinged door was closed.<sup>22</sup>

This was a simple trap compared with the one through which the insurgent Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with all their com-

<sup>20</sup> Furttenbach is not very definite as to the method of mounting, and he seems to offer a choice between grooves or bolts to hold the canvas frame in place.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*, p. 129.

<sup>22</sup> These hinged trap doors are essentially identical with the device described by Sabbatini (*Pratica*, Bk. II, Chapt. 17).

pany were swallowed by the yawning earth.<sup>23</sup> An entire board of the main-stage floor, though level with it, was suspended on four ropes which ran over the upper beams and down again to a substage winch. When the winch was turned after Moses' curse, the board with the rebels on it sank slowly into the "cellar," from which wailing sounds, fiery flames, and smoke emerged.

In turning our attention from the trap room to the "flies," we notice that in his *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel* Furttenbach fails to explain the arrangement of the permanent clouds though he does give detailed information concerning his various cloud machines. For enlightenment on the subject of permanent clouds, we open the *Architectura Recreationis* where Furttenbach is quite specific on their arrangement.<sup>24</sup> He used five rows of clouds, one behind the other, each row consisting of a curved board<sup>25</sup> cut out and painted to resemble clouds. The cloud borders were nailed permanently to beams running parallel to the footlights across the top of the stage. The second cloud hung lower than the first, the third lower than the second, and so forth. Clouds 2 through 5 received their light from oil lamps mounted on the convex side of the preceding cloud; on the first cloud light was thrown from the oil lamps mounted behind the proscenium crosspiece.

Besides permanent clouds, Furttenbach employed cloud machines. In the *Architectura Recreationis*, he made provision for the appearance of a cloud chariot, which would come in between cloud borders 4 and 5, to display sundry divinities.<sup>26</sup> The cloud was mounted on a braced angle-piece which was drawn in on a steering track by a system of pulleys (*Rollwerk*).

In his *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*, Furttenbach is chiefly concerned with cloud machines to bring on various angels. In the *Abraham*, for instance, the angel of the Lord was to appear from between the clouds to prevent the execution of Abraham's sacrifice.<sup>27</sup> The scene was Mount Moriah which was shown on the

<sup>23</sup> *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*, p. 129.

<sup>24</sup> *Architectura Recreationis*, p. 70.

<sup>25</sup> In describing this curved board Furttenbach uses the Italian word "cerchio" which literally means "circle," certainly an unfortunate term. Sabbatini used the same type of sectional sky (cf. *Pratica*, Bk. II, Chapt. 37; English translation with illustrations in Nagler, *op. cit.*, p. 96).

<sup>26</sup> *Architectura Recreationis*, p. 70.

<sup>27</sup> *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*, pp. 126-127.

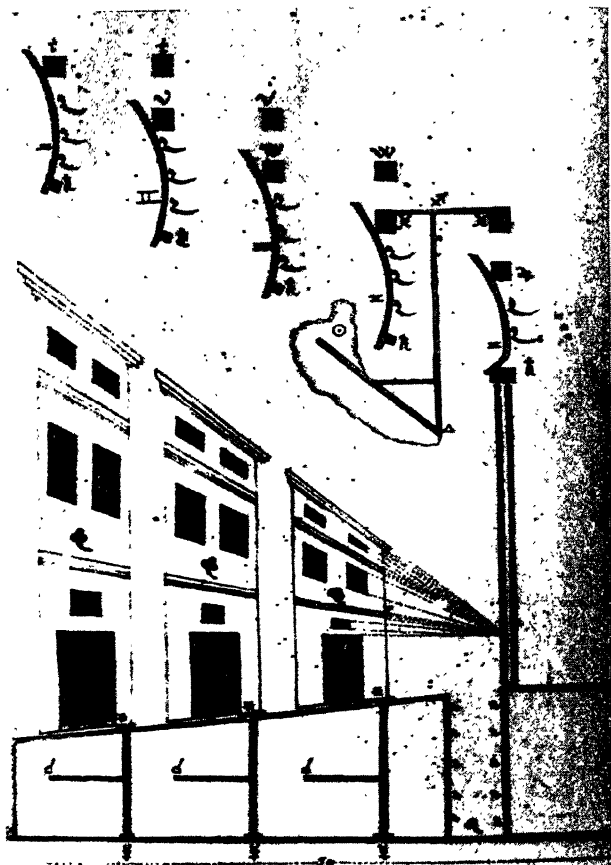


Plate 5. Cross Section of a Stage Designed by Furttenbach.  
The arrangement of the sectional sky and provision for a  
cloud chariot are shown.

(*Architectura Recreationis*, Plate 23)

rear stage. Two boards, each 16' long, were cross-connected so that a space of 2' remained between them. At a point equidistant from their ends, the boards were cradled, by means of pegs, in the joists above the stage so that they could swing freely, in seesaw fashion, parallel with the footlights. One half of the boards was screened with painted clouds, and the angel sat between them. The other half was counterweighted. When the stagehands brought the boards into a vertical position, the angel in the clouds became visible to the spectators, and when the boards were returned to the horizontal position, the angel disappeared.

This same device was used to bring on the angel who announced the birth of Christ to the Shepherds.<sup>28</sup> In this scene, however, more than one angel was needed. On the Furttenbach stage, the multitude of the Heavenly Host was represented by three angels seated in a glory that floated down from the "grid" above the rear stage. Three curly-wigged boys, dressed in white shirts with red sashes were seated on small benches inside a wooden box from which one side, that facing the audience, had been removed. This opening, measuring 5' square, was surrounded by a cloud frame painted with angels' heads. Within, the box was lined with lozenged brass foil (tombac) so that the inside walls would well reflect the light coming from three wax candles behind the cloud frame. A copper funnel above each light prevented the smoke from bothering the boys' eyes. The three angels in the box sang the "Glory to God" supported by an unseen boys' choir. The cloud box was counterweighted and operated through a windlass set in the beams above the rear stage.

In the Moses play still another cloud machine was used for the appearance of "a destroying angel."<sup>29</sup> Between the beams above the main stage and the top of the roof, two uprights (height, 10') were secured. Between these uprights a lever (length, 16') was mounted which functioned like the lever of a village draw well. The rear end of the swinging bar was weighted with oaken blocks, and at its front end the cloud was suspended so that it would always remain in a straight vertical position. The cloud was composed of painted wooden boards with

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>29</sup> *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*, p. 126.

an opening in the center through which the angel, seated on a concealed bench, could be seen. When two men in the "flies" lifted the counterweighted end of the swinging bar, the cloud would descend so that the angel, with his naked sword, could step out onto the stage. Then the cloud would disappear. After the angel had carried out his mission, the cloud would return to take him off.

Much more complicated was the cloud machine which Furttenbach constructed for the "Glory of Mount Sinai" in the Moses drama.<sup>30</sup> The Lord was to speak to Moses through the sun. For this scene, Furttenbach built another wooden box similar to the one used for the three angels. Again the inside walls were lined with lozenged brass foil in order to catch the reflection from the light of the three wax candles. But this time the box was smaller, measuring 3' square in front and 2' square in back. The front was screened by a cloud circle so that only a central opening, 2' in diameter, remained. Even this small aperture could be closed by means of a shutter. The sun was placed within it; a sun consisting of the following elements: first a sun stencil with 16 sunbeams cut from a sheet of brass metal (Furttenbach suggested the use of a barber's basin); next came, fitted into the round center of the stencil, a crude approximation of a plano-convex lens. This "lens," made to order in the glass works, was a round bottle (diameter, 5") flat on one side and convex on the one facing the audience.<sup>31</sup> The bottle had an opening at the top through which red-colored water was poured. At the bottom, the bottle had a peg-shaped neck which rested in a hollow at the back of the brass sun. By means of hooks the "lens" was fastened to the stencil. The brass stencil and the bottle attached thereto could be swayed somewhat to the left and to the right by means of two iron rods not visible to the spectators. Hung between the permanent clouds above the rear stage, where Mount Sinai was set up, the sun was not conspicuous at first because the shutter in front of it was still closed. But, when the time came for the Lord to speak to Moses, the shutter

<sup>30</sup> *Idem*, p. 128.

<sup>31</sup> Serlio, in the Second Book of his *Architettura* (Paris 1545), had already made reference to such lenses when he wrote: "If the bottles or other vessels of glasse on the side where the light stands were flat, or rather hollow, it would show the clearer," and "But if you need a great light to show more than the rest, then set a torch behind, and behind the torch a bright Bason: the brightness whereof will shew like the beames of the sunne." (Cf. the reprint of the English translation of 1611 in Nagler, *op. cit.*, p. 79.)



was pulled upward to the sound of thunder and trumpets, and the light, collected by the "lens," shone through the clouds.<sup>32</sup>

Mount Sinai, by the way, was a practicable, three-dimensional set piece, 8' high, 5' wide, and 3' deep.<sup>33</sup> Wooden boards were cut out and painted to resemble a steep mountain. The presence of a set of steps, for the convenience of the actor who played Moses, was concealed by the masking rocks. Moses was on the main stage which represented the desert. Suddenly all the back shutters were drawn, and the audience beheld Mount Sinai on the rear stage. Moses then crossed upstage and climbed the mountain. At this point came the sun effect.

Mount Sinai was also in evidence in the scene with the "bush burning with fire."<sup>34</sup> This time, the mountain was placed farther to the left to make room for the bush to the right. With the help of natural foliage, Furttenbach created a small grove putting the bush in the center. The foliage was placed against the back wall of the stage. In this wall, 4' above the stage floor, an opening 1' square was cut. Behind the stage wall, in the dressing room that is, a stagehand was posted to set the bush on fire. In Italy Furttenbach had seen parasols which must have been a novelty in Ulm for he describes a specimen at great length. He covered a parasol frame with black leather and, with gold lacquer, painted the fiery rays of the sun upon the cover. Unseen by the audience, a stagehand in the dressing room would push the closed parasol through the hole in the wall between the foliage, and when the bush was to begin to glow he would open it. The lights hanging in the rear pit would make the lacquered fire-streams on the parasol cover shine, and the man would keep rotating it until the fire was to subside. He then would fold the parasol and withdraw it.

So far we have not seen the rear pit in action, that is, when it was not being used as a rear stage. To see it used as an actual pit, let us turn to Furttenbach's sea scenes.<sup>35</sup> After the removal of the rear-stage flooring, waves could be put in place. For a quiet sea, a board with painted waves was set up so that it rested against the back wall which, for this purpose, was painted

<sup>32</sup> In the *Architectura Recreationis* (p. 62), Furttenbach speaks also of a "double-glass sun."

<sup>33</sup> *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*, pp. 134-135.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135-137.

"like air with floating small clouds and the playing of sunshine on them." If the sea was to be rough, a board with larger painted waves was used, and the crests of the waves were cut out *in relief*. The fourth back shutter was removed altogether, and the wave board was placed in the fourth groove of the lower shutter beam so that it could be pushed back and forth in the channel. Two wave boards could be used in combination, the "calm sea" against the back wall forming the horizon line and the "rough sea" in the fourth shutter groove. Between the two wave boards, a ship could appear. There was still a third form of wave—the "tremendous" one—used in tempest scenes. Across the rear pit, parallel to the footlights, a wooden shaft was laid whose terminal pegs rested in iron forks. Lengthwise along the wooden shaft four jagged boards, painted like a churned sea, were mounted by tenons. By turning the shaft in the iron forks, in the manner of a roasting spit, the illusion of a sea in motion could be conveyed. From two to three of these wave rolls could be used, one behind the other.<sup>36</sup>

A special form of wave had to be invented for the scene in which only the Children of Israel were allowed to pass through the Red Sea.<sup>37</sup> Furttenbach took two wooden boards, each 14' long and 3' wide, and painted horrifying waves on them. Each board was carved to taper at one end forming, so to speak, the handle of a large oar on whose blades the waves were painted and their crests carved. The handles were counterweighted, and each "oar" was pegged into the lower shutter beam so that it could be turned from the initial horizontal position to a vertical one. When Moses would touch the sea with his staff, the two waves assumed the vertical position by the stagehands' lowering of the counterweighted handle. Then the Children of Israel would pass through the sea between the two erect waves, "and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left." But when Pharaoh and his horsemen would attempt the passage, the boards were brought back to their horizontal position, or, in less technical language, the waves collapsed and buried the Egyptians.

A whale, of course, was featured in the Jonah play.<sup>38</sup> It had

<sup>36</sup> Furttenbach's "roasting-spit" wave roll was similar to Sabbattini's wave cylinders which were turned by cranks (cf. *Practica*, Bk. II, Chapt. 29).

<sup>37</sup> *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*, pp. 135-136.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

to be a three-dimensional device with a cavity able to sustain the young actor who played Jonah. The abdominal portion of its body was carved from a piece of linden wood. The tergal part was formed of canvas-covered hoops, and the whole was painted to give the impression of an ugly sea monster. The total length of the whale was 11'. The mouth cavity had a diameter of  $2\frac{1}{2}'$ . The animal was mounted on a three-legged trestle with casters. By operating a lever, a stagehand could move the whale up and down as well as left and right. By means of a cord, the upper jaw could be lifted, and as it was weighted with 12 pounds of lead, it closed automatically upon release of the cord. In the eye sockets mirrors were set, each having a diameter of 3". Two men were responsible for the success of the device, one who wheeled the trestle in the rear pit, the other who operated the lever and the cord. Jonah, to be swallowed by the whale, had to crawl into its mouth. From within the body he could extricate himself by slipping through a hole at that side of the whale which at the moment was not turned toward the spectators. Having slipped through the hole, which was covered with painted canvas, the Jonah-actor found himself in the rear pit. When the time came for Jonah's ejection from the whale, the actor crawled back into the whale's body and emerged from its jaws.

In the Jonah play a ship also went into action.<sup>39</sup> Furttenbach built a one-masted sailboat of thin laths (length, 12'; height, 2'; width,  $2\frac{1}{2}'$ ). The ship was set on a four-wheeled carriage, but mounted on an axle so that it could swing freely to give the impression of being rocked by the waves when set in motion by two guide poles, one fore and one aft. The boat carried Jonah and five mariners. In view of the weight of the contrivance, the ship had to be moved with the help of a winch in the rear pit.

The scene of boat and whale must have been an exciting one. A storm was in progress. The "roasting-spit" wave roll was turned in its forks. There was lightning, thunder, and a howling wind. The boat was hauled in by a rope coiled on a winch drum. The passenger and crew raised their arms in prayer. Suddenly the whale entered with gaping mouth and began to trail the

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137.

vessel. When the sailors had cast Jonah forth into the whale's mouth, the storm subsided. The "roasting spit" was removed and laid on the floor of the rear pit. The lights came up, and the sea was calm again.

The thunder effect in this scene was achieved by means of stone balls which were rolled in a wooden sloping channel above the stage.<sup>40</sup> For a good thunderstorm, Furttenbach used as many as twelve stone balls, and four men were required to roll them up and down the channel.<sup>41</sup> When these men threw the balls against the planks of the thunder run, the audience heard great peals of thunder.

Two more men had to stand on the upper beams to produce lightning between the clouds.<sup>42</sup> Each man held a lighted wax candle between the middle and ring fingers of his right hand and, at the same time, formed a hollow of his palm. In this hollow the men held powdered and sifted colophony. By swinging their outstretched arms, the rosin powder would fly into the light of the candles creating a reasonable approximation of flashes of lightning. Men with sensitive palms were advised to protect them with a piece of sheet metal.<sup>43</sup>

Furttenbach's wind machine<sup>44</sup> consisted primarily of large bellows that blew out the air as far as the auditorium. To reproduce the howling sound, he took a number of veneer strips, 2' long and 3" wide, with a hole bored at one end through which was slung a string (length, 1¼'). To the loose end of the string a ring was attached. Grasping the ring, Furttenbach would swing the veneer strip in a circle, and the desired howling sound would result.<sup>45</sup>

Naturally, thunder and lightning could be effective only if

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>41</sup> Serlio in 1545 (cf. Nagler, *op. cit.*, p. 80) and Sabbattini in 1638 (*Pratica*, Bk. II, Chapt. 51) had advocated the same method though Serlio thought that one "great Bullet" or "some other great Ordinance" was sufficient, and Sabbattini solved the problem with one or three iron or stone balls.

<sup>42</sup> *Manierlicher Kunst-Spiegel*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>43</sup> Serlio's method was altogether safer: "There must be a man placed behind the stage or scaffold in a high place with a boxe in his hand, the cover whereof must be full of powder, and in the middle of that place there shall be a burning candle placed, the boxe must be filled with powder of vernis or sulphure, and casting his hand with the boxe towards the powder flying in the candle will shew as if it were lightning." (Nagler, *op. cit.*, p. 80.)

<sup>44</sup> *Manierlicher Kunst-Spiegel*, p. 130.

<sup>45</sup> Sabbattini (*Pratica*, Bk. II, Chapt. 51) uses exactly the same device.

the stage was darkened, and to the problem of stage lighting we must now turn our attention. Before discussing Furttenbach's distribution of light sources, we shall do well to recognize his chief problem—that of intensity, or rather, the lack of it. This lack explains why he continually stresses the importance of reflectors, be it in connection with the use of oil lamps or of wax candles. Here, then, is Furttenbach's standard reflector.<sup>46</sup> He took an iron plate heavily coated with tin. The height of this base was 8", its width 5". Upon it he placed a layer of tombac of the same size, but only after the foil had been lozenged in a wooden mold. Finally, there came a layer of transparent mica (*Steinhorn*). The three layers were held together tightly by a narrow, tinned iron frame.

In front of these reflectors, Furttenbach used oil lamps and wax candles. The oil lamps were made of glass.<sup>47</sup> The lamp glass measured 4" in diameter at the top and narrowed toward the bottom to a 1" diameter. The tapering off began 1½" below the rim. Into the conical part, fresh water was poured, while the upper section, with the even 4" diameter, was filled with 14 pound of oil. The oil did not quite reach the rim.

Special attention had to be given to the wick holder that floated in the oil. A piece of brass wire was shaped into a ring (diameter, 2½") upon which six tiny wooden blocks were threaded equidistantly. Diagonally across the ring, a bridge of braided wire was spanned. In the center of this cross-connection, a small eye was left to hold the cotton wick in place. The wick was 3" long, but ⅓" rose above the central eye, the rest being immersed in the oil. After the wick holder had been placed on the oil, the lamp was ready for use.

The tapering lamps had to have some sort of wall brackets into which they could be set. For this purpose, Furttenbach had iron ring-screws placed at various points of the stage, especially behind the proscenium frame, between the clouds, and in the rear pit. He suggested that the screws be long enough to keep the lamps at a distance of 2½" from the wood. Behind each lamp,

<sup>46</sup> *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*, pp. 133-134.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.

a standard reflector was hung by means of an eye and hook, not only for the sake of greater light intensity but for fire prevention as well. Experience had taught Furttenbach that such a lamp would burn twelve hours on a quarter of a pound of oil if fresh water was added once in a while to keep the dwindling oil supply close to the rim of the glass. He considered fifty of these lamps sufficient to illuminate a set.

Furttenbach also made use of some portable lamps in which he burned candles.<sup>48</sup> These lamps had a wedge-shaped base, which was nothing other than a standard reflector; another reflector stood in back of the candle which, in turn, stuck in a holder in the wedge. These particular lamps were chiefly used along the proscenium line as footlights. There were ten of them each 2' apart, their presence being hidden by the  $\frac{3}{4}$ " elongation of the screen in front of the substage area.

Another type of portable lamp<sup>49</sup> had a base and three walls, with all four inside surfaces standard reflectors. The bottom and the side walls were executed in strong perspective reduction for the sake of light intensification. By means of an eye in the back of the rear reflector, such a candle lamp could be hung on a hook in the rear pit. When this type of lamp was given a ventilated roof and a mica front, it was called a "perspective lantern."<sup>50</sup> This lantern, however, was seldom used on the stage; Furttenbach had designed it for use in private homes.

Finally, a word must be said about Furttenbach's method of darkening the stage.<sup>51</sup> This could have been done by the clumsy method of extinguishing one light after the other, but the smell of smoldering wicks would hardly have been pleasing to the spectators' nostrils. Furttenbach's solution of this problem was to suspend iron "dimmers" on cords above the light sources.<sup>52</sup> When the cords were released, the shades descended upon the lights without extinguishing them, and when they were pulled

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> "Perspektische Laterne" in Furttenbach's *Beschreibung einer neuen Büchsen-Compagnie* 1627, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> *Manuskript der Kunst-Spiegel*, pp. 130-131.

<sup>52</sup> Furttenbach does not speak of cylindrical shades, such as Sabbattini (*Pratica*, Bk. II, Chap. 12), but refers to the device as cap (*Kappe*), or little box (*Kästlin*), a term which perhaps indicates that his shade was a four-edged casing. Otherwise his principle is identical with that of Sabbattini.

up, the lights came on again. This darkening method was used *à vista* when Moses, irritated by Pharaoh's stubbornness, caused night to fall on Egypt. Needless to say, the stage was darkened during the storm scene in the Jonah play and was illuminated gradually as the storm subsided after the whale had swallowed his sacrificial victim.

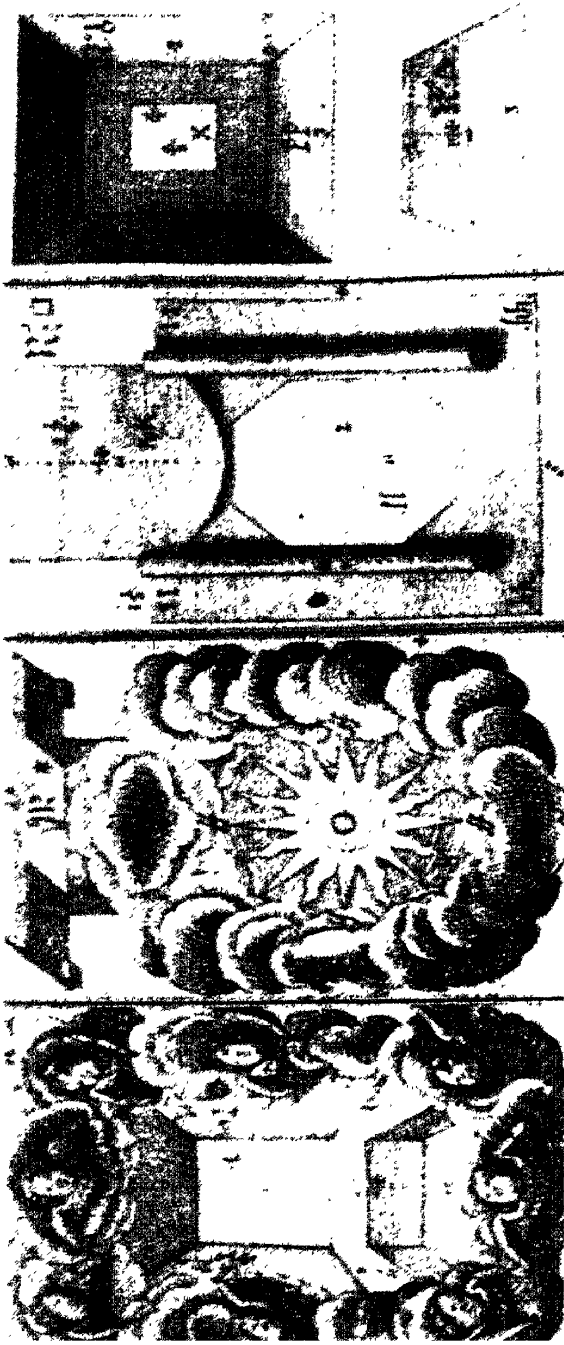


Plate 6. Stage Machines by Furttenbach (A).

*From left to right: Glory for the appearance of the multitude of the Heavenly Host; cloud machine for the "Glory of Mount Sinai"; back view of shutter arrangement in the cloud machine; wooden box lined with lozenge brass foil used as a reflector for the "Glory of Mount Sinai."*



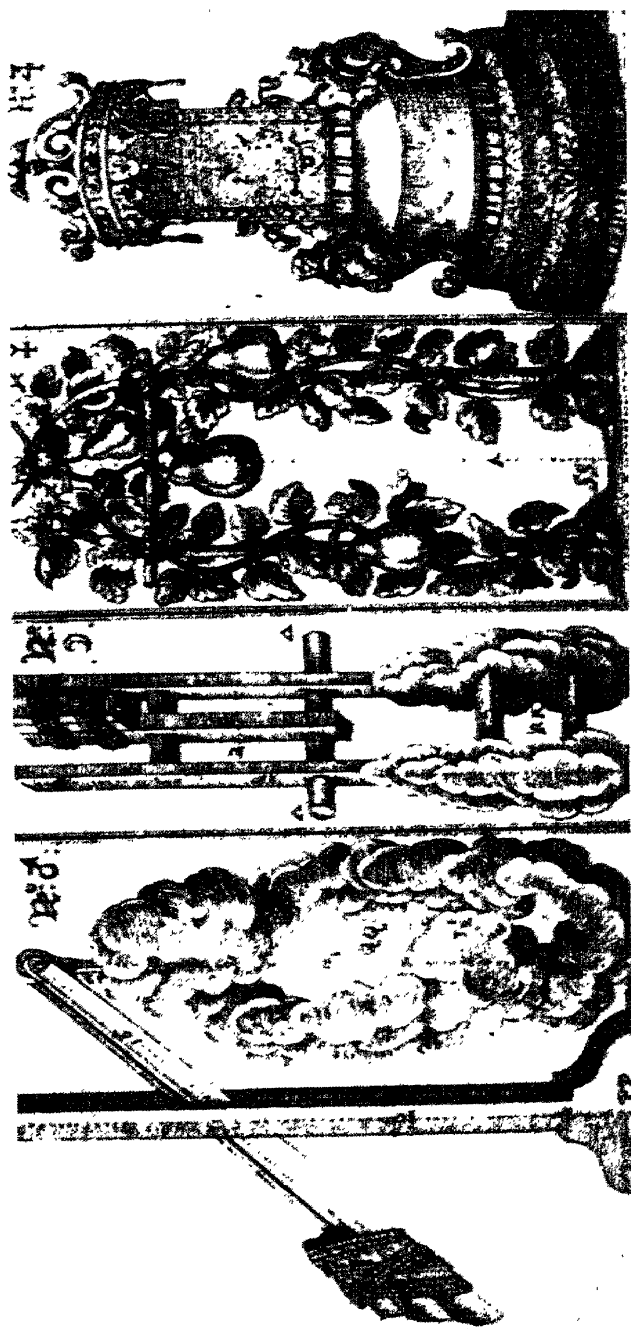


Plate 7. Stage Machines by Furtenbach (B).

*From left to right:* Cloud for the appearance of "a destroying angel"; cloud for the angel who prevents Abraham's sacrifice; the bower with gourds for the Jonah play; Pharaoh's throne.

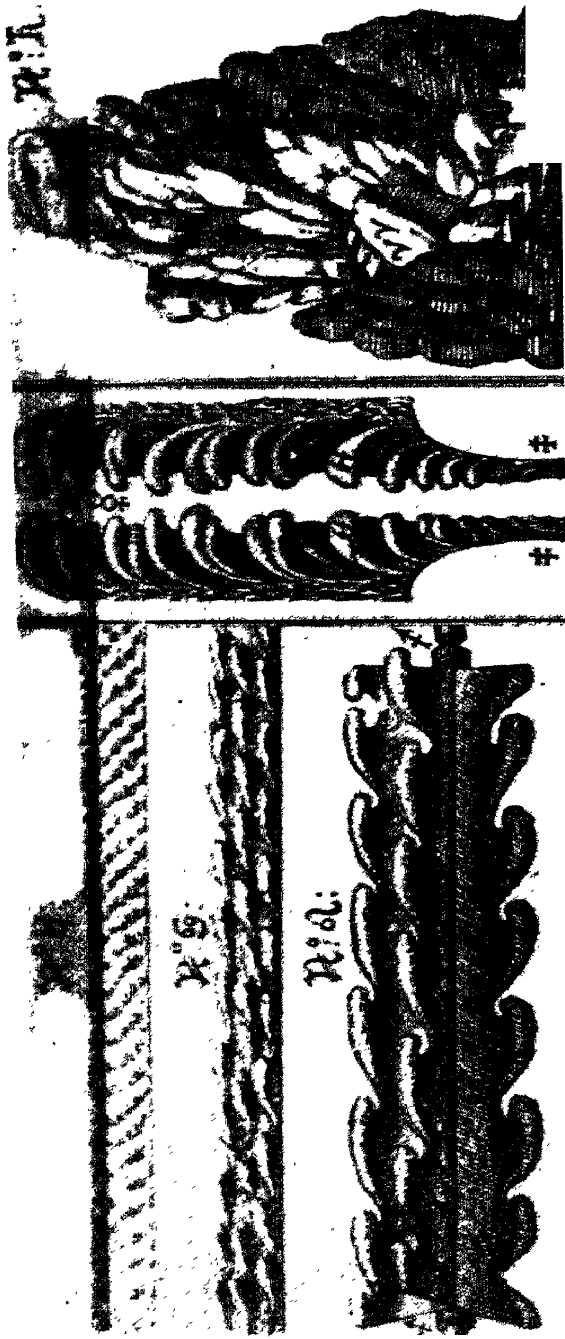


Plate 8. Stage Machines by Furttenbach (C).

*From left to right:* Three waves—at top is the wave board for a quiet sea, in the center the wave board cut in relief for a rough sea, and at the bottom the roller for a tremendous wave; two erect waves; practicable three-dimensional set piece for Mount Sinai.

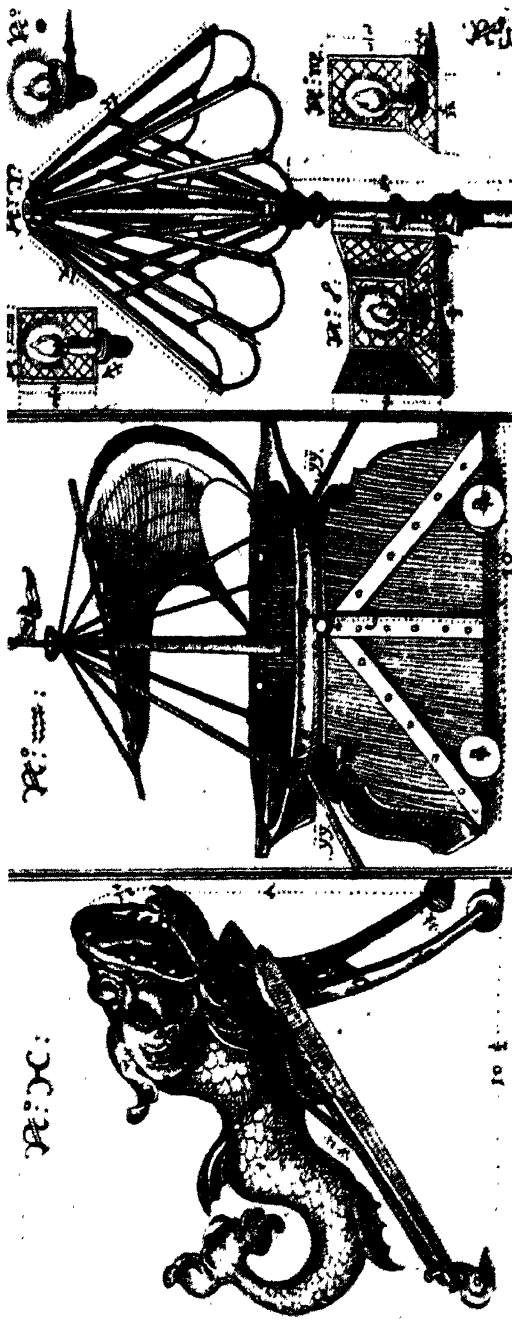


Plate 9. Stage Machines by Furttenbach (D).

*From left to right:* The whale who swallowed Jonah; the ship for Jonah's voyage; in the center the parasol frame used in the scene with the "burning bush with fire," and in the corners various light sources—upper left, candle in front of a reflector; upper right, oil lamp with screw; lower left, portable lamp with base and three reflector surfaces; lower right, wedge-shaped base for a candle in front of a reflector.

(All stage machines are sections of Plate 13 in *Mannhafter Kunst-Spiegel*)



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*Photograph by Oggiano Studio, New York*

**MAX REINHARDT**

*Last Portrait*

**From the private collection of William W. Melnitz whose tribute  
to the great man will be found on page seven.**



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## MAX REINHARDT

1873-1943

In October of 1953 the tenth anniversary of the death of Max Reinhardt was commemorated both here and abroad. Speeches were made and articles written paying tribute to the unique nature of Reinhardt's genius and praising him for his great contribution to the world of the theatre. Now, I would like to add my praise by an attempt to rehabilitate the reputation of Reinhardt, the director, for, in my opinion, he has been quite unjustly remembered only as a "showman."

Although, as a great artist, Reinhardt knew how to impart to every drama its individual style, its specific atmosphere, its own music, and décor (for which he was often criticized), he considered the actor and playwright the most important elements in the theatre. He, himself a fine actor and dramatist in the truest sense of the word, saw no division in the two concepts. At Columbia University in February of 1928 he declared: "All the great dramatists have been born actors, whether or not they have formally adopted this calling." In the same address he said that Shakespeare was "the greatest, the one truly incomparable boon that the theatre has had. He was poet, actor, and producer in one. He painted landscapes and fashioned architectural scenes with his words. In his plays everything is bathed in music, and flows into the dance. He stands nearest the Creator. It is a wonderful full-rounded world that he made—the earth with all its flowers, the sea with all its storms, the light of the sun, the moon, the stars; fire with all its terrors and the air with all its spirits—and in between, human beings with all their passions, their humor and tragedy, beings of elemental grandeur and, at the same time, utter truth."

It was Reinhardt's dream to recreate the world of Shakespeare on his stage, and, like all the dreams of his rich and happy life, it came true; not, of course, without unflagging effort and a drive almost incomprehensible today. He continued and extended the work of the courageous Duke George of Saxe-Meiningen of introducing Shakespeare to the German theatregoer.

This single achievement of transforming Shakespeare into a truly German classic would of itself be sufficient to assure him a place in literary history, but Reinhardt accomplished even

more for world literature, especially in Germany, through his epoch-making act of breathing new life into classical drama and infusing contemporary plays with poetry and import. As Ernst Lothar remarked in his commemorative address in Salzburg, "... he removed the armor from the classics so that one could see their hearts beat." He lent to the German classical authors our modern ethos; to Lessing by means of an inimitable revival of *Minna von Barnhelm*; and to Goethe by various interpretations of *Faust* and through performances of *Clavigo* and the previously unstaged *Stella*. In entrancing productions of *The Robbers*, *Love and Intrigue*, and *Don Carlos*—a six-hour-long presentation followed silently by an enraptured sophisticated metropolitan audience—he lifted Schiller to new heights. The genius of Kleist, too, became apparent as never before by means of Reinhardt's psychological insight into Kleist's plays; only he succeeded in bringing to life *The Battle of Arminius*.

Reinhardt's daring went further. He resurrected the works of representative Storm and Stress dramatists and also the revolutionary pieces of Büchner and Grabbe, long absent from the German stage.

To the same degree as he modernized the classics without minimizing their grandeur, Reinhardt gave to the modern dramatists their full measure of import. Only those of us who were privileged to participate in his unforgettable endeavors know the debt of gratitude owed him by authors like Wedekind, Shaw, Tolstoi, Hauptman, Hofmannstahl, Beer-Hofmann, Hamsun, Schmidtbonn, and many more whose plays he made famous. With his magic touch he often filled out a skeleton outline of a new play or turned a third-rate script into first-rate theatre.

Max Reinhardt gave the German theatre a place in the sun. The international repertory which he introduced was followed for a full quarter of a century in all the many German playhouses and made Germany the leading theatre centre of the world. He had earned the right to say, as he did in a manly letter written from Oxford, England in 1933 and addressed to the Nazi regime, that his theatre, which he was handing over to the new rulers as a gift, had become an integral part of the national cultural riches of Germany. His repertory, above all else, justified these proud words.

WILLIAM W. MELNITZ

# THE TONE OF GREEK TRAGEDY

by

DONALD SUTHERLAND

Eckermann, in his *Conversations With Goethe*, records the following exchange between himself and the great man, in 1827:

"Perhaps," said Goethe, "the light scenes woven into the tragedies of Shakespeare also rest on this law of required change; it seems to be inapplicable only to the higher tragedy of the Greeks; in their case much rather a fixed keynote runs through the whole."

"Greek tragedy," I said, "is also not of such a length that it could grow tiresome with an even tone throughout; and then too choruses and dialogue make a change, and the sublime meaning is of such a kind that it cannot become burdensome, since there is always a certain solid reality underlying it, which is always of a lively nature."

"You may be right," said Goethe, "and it would be well worth the trouble to investigate how far Greek tragedy too is subject to the general law of required change."

The investigation proposed in passing by Goethe has got hardly anywhere in over a hundred years. It is still very generally assumed that any Greek tragedy proceeds with unwavering and quite unsalted sublimity from its beginning through its middle to its end. Sometimes it is admitted that Euripides brought the whole pitch of tragedy down from the sublime to the miserable, but Euripidean misery is felt to be scarcely more variable than Aeschylean and Sophoclean sublimity. When Euripides does seem to smile through his warm tears one feels he is being less Euripides than the predecessor of Menander in wistful comedy. One expects the extant Greek tragedies to exemplify unity of tone at least as well as they after all do exemplify the unities of time, place, and action. Deviations of tone can be considered, as the few deviations from the other unities are, historical curiosities or lapses from the Idea of Greek Tragedy.

There are good reasons why the prejudice toward unity of tone has gone on so long and will continue. One reason is that the plays are read primarily as poetry, or as theological or

paideutic or anthropological documents, not as if they had ever been meant for the stage. The brute fact that they were so meant can be ignored with better than a good conscience, with a thrill of high-mindedness and high seriousness, because no less an aesthete than Aristotle assures us that "spectacle" or "the show" is the least of the elements of a tragedy. He was not the man to imagine that a play is to the stage as a fish is to water. Goethe might imagine this, and hint that tragedy is subject to the dynamics of audience attention even among the Greeks, but Goethe wrote and produced plays himself and so was naturally liable to such extrinsic considerations as actuality.

If all one's doubts are not calmed by Aristotle and one still asks oneself how an audience of Athenians, notorious for wit and not for patience, ever endured the actual production of a whole trilogy in a single emotional key and so high and sombre a key at that, one may answer oneself that Greek tragedies were religious rituals. One may, it is true, still suspect some difference of tone between a Dionysiac ritual and a Presbyterian sermon, between an enthusiastic fertility cult and the cult of Original Sin, between the most variable god in the Greek pantheon and the absolute Jehovah, but then one is free to calm oneself with the belief that all the drunken and disorderly elements in the cult were drawn out of the trilogy and consigned to the satyr-play appended to the trilogy in perfunctory courtesy to tradition, so the trilogy proper might bend all its mind and all its form to the sublimest possible figuration of Man and his Destiny, or an improved notion of Deity. One sets the tone at approximately that of The Book of Job or of *Paradise Lost*, allowing for more *bravura* in Aeschylus, more lucidity in Sophocles, and more *coloratura* and fever in Euripides.

However we may sophisticate our sense of the content with Freud, Marx, Mallarmé, and the Semantics of Ambiguity, we shall no doubt always expect the style of a Greek tragedy never to modulate, or only and very slightly in the choruses. Even in our actual theatre the audience which can be induced to attend a Greek tragedy is normally trained to expect an educational or elevating kind of tedium, an oracular welter of imagery, and a diction portentous, sonorous, and obscure, in keeping with the



depth or depths of The Message. Since Greek tragedy is part of our cultural heritage, people who like culture or inheriting something can like Greek tragedy, and when they do they like it to sound as solid and expensive as possible. The actors should sound as if they had the meaning of Life in their mouths at all times, alternating a kind of Anglican elocution with virtuosity in wailing. If the audience has read Aristotle and demands catharsis for the same price, it can have what is virtually the same thing—exhaustion.

It is not easy to translate Greek tragedy in a way that lives up to such expectations. Robinson Jeffers, in doing a *Medea*\* after Euripides, was certainly right to give up the original as a hopeless case and write his own play. After all, Seneca did the same, and we owe Racine's *Phèdre* to his high hand with both the *Hippolytus* of Euripides and the *Phaedra* of Seneca. No doubt Greek tragedy is best taken as a matrix, a bag of tricks and themes, still at the service of later dramatists. Only the academic mind need worry about what the plays were to the Greek audience of the 5th century B.C. And indeed the academic mind does well to pursue other worries than this one, which leads to the harrowing discovery that we know next to nothing about the original tone of the plays and that consequently, in the elementary matter of what actors call the "motivation" of the lines (as against mere lofty declamation of the poetry at the audience), we are as helplessly ignorant as if we could not read Greek.

Once, not suspecting that ignorance of specific tone is a function of a vaster ignorance enveloping the whole expressive character of the plays, I decided to translate a few Greek tragedies strictly as plays for the stage, by the simple device of keeping the English at least as plain semantically and as frugal tonally as the Greek, so that an audience could follow the sometimes intricate movement of the drama as closely as the Greek audience presumably did, whatever they may have made of the thicker choruses. I would try to get the translations staged before a university audience not overly prejudiced in favor of things Greek or even of things "Grecian," and I felt sure that if the

\* Robinson Jeffers, *Medea* (New York: Random House, 1946).

dramas were conveyed by the language instead of draped in it the audience would get something of the original impact.\*

With such a purpose and such a projection in mind, it is not difficult to know what to do when, for example, at the beginning of the *Oedipus*, a group of suppliants is addressed as (literally) "Cadmus of old's young brood." This was plain enough exposition to the original audience, setting the place at Thebes (founded by Cadmus) and the time several generations after the founding. To a modern audience this is not only hideous as rhetoric but meaningless, and likely to produce premature consternation among those who feel less than adequately up on their mythology. So one sacrifices the letter of the original to the dramaturgy and calls the group of suppliants the "young brood of ancient Thebes" or, if one is writing iambic verse, the "latest brood of ancient Thebes." Such matters are simple enough, but it is surprising how they and even smaller ones, like refusing to poetize or archaize (as, *e.g.*, with "thee" and "thou") when there is no occasion for it in the original, bring the plays closer.

But there comes a time when the tone of one word will throw the whole play or a whole trilogy into question and no objective answer is available. The most sinister example of this comes in the *Choephoroi* of Aeschylus, when an old nurse complains about the nuisance of tending an infant: one of the nuisances is called by a blunt Greek word which even the dictionary translates printably as "to make water." In standard translations of the play this is called the infant's "clamant need" or "lower weakling need." Such gentility is in itself enough to goad one into translating the Greek by the equivalent blunt English word. But what then?

One may call this a rare instance of "comic relief" before the sublime slaughter begins, and one may pass over it quickly in reading, but, if the theatre audience was not to some degree habituated to changes of tone, even such violent changes as this, and if this is the only comic touch in the whole *Oresteia* trilogy, how could it not have stopped the show? If, in a suspicious frame of mind, one goes back to the first play of the trilogy, the *Agamemnon*, one may be struck by the remark Aga-

\* Mr. Sutherland's translation of *Oedipus Rex* was produced in 1948 by the University of Colorado Laboratory Theatre and *Agamemnon* in 1952 by the Community Players, University of Colorado. — EDITOR'S NOTE

memnon makes to Clytaemnestra after her speech of welcome: that she has made her speech appropriate to his ten years' absence at Troy—"long drawn-out." This is all too plainly a joke in the Greek, but the standard translations and more recent ones muffle it, so that if it is understood at all it is not understood as a broad joke. Which is just as well.

Because if you translate it as a joke you are then obliged to interpret the whole scene between Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra so as to "motivate" the joke, to make it *dramatically* possible. No doubt it is meant in part to disarm the audience, to win it back from any Athenian impatience with the long speech preceding, but the remark is after all addressed to Clytaemnestra, and if it is as brutally insulting to her as it seems, we lose what uncertain admiration and sympathy we do have for Agamemnon, mug us as he may, our sense of the wickedness of Clytaemnestra in killing the hero is considerably dulled, and indeed the whole scene between them becomes painful and vulgar instead of sublime. And yet, if the joke is interpreted as rather intimate and joyful marital banter on the regal scale—in the vein of humor of which say Henry IV or Louis XIV were capable—condescending but gay, sumptuous, and charming, and if the bickering between them which follows, over whether or not he should walk on the embroidered crimson cloaks, is interpreted as more of this vein of humor and less than half serious, Clytaemnestra too becomes charming—as the welcoming queen and wife she means to seem—and the falsity of such charm turned on, which the audience can appreciate, makes her the more horrifying. The scene so interpreted stages well, but it does interfere with the usual importance and fateful symbolical symbolism given to the crimson cloaks and the *hybris* or extravagant pride Agamemnon shows in walking on them. I reassure myself with the thought that even those who like *hybris* in their tragedy can hardly feel that his *hybris* in walking on expensive cloth should be presented at the same pitch of seriousness as his *hybris* in sacrificing his daughter, Iphigeneia. Possibly this trivial or playful or even engaging outrage on the cloaks is deliberately arranged to distract us from the greater outrage and allow our sympathies to be more fully with Agamemnon, at least until after his murder, and our shock of recognition to be greater then, when Clytaemnestra

calls her act a just revenge for his murder of their daughter. The cloaks taken as part of the imagery of the hunting-net which dominates the whole trilogy are none the less deadly for being made enticing with gayety. There are more complex possibilities still in the stagecraft—let alone the suggestions and allusions and symbols one may allow for—of this one scene, and so it goes throughout the trilogy, until one comes to wondering whether the variability and resource of Aeschylus were really much short of Shakespeare's, as by all the historical and cultural signs they must have been.

If they were not, the untimely debate by the chorus of elders after Agamemnon's death cries may be a senatorial absurdity of almost Aristophanic verve, the chorus which puns on the name Helen may well be in some parts a *scherzo*, Aegisthus may very well be an effeminate and psychopathic grotesque, some of the remarks of the chorus to Cassandra may be, as dramatically they should be, harsh mockery, and so on, until one would be obliged to call the *Oresteia* a tragicomedy with an extraordinary range of tonalities. If it is that, the gross word used by the nurse is accounted for and made possible, so is the "untragic" disguise of Orestes in the *Choephoroi*, and indeed the mechanical awkwardness of the last play, the *Eumenides*, in converting the chorus from worse than Gorgons to benevolent goddesses, is obviated if their horror is modulated from the beginning with a vein of macabre humor, or *Galgenhumor* as the Germans call it. The text will stand all this and more, but our ideas about Aeschylus and our most elementary bearings on Greek Tragedy will not. This is much worse than having to think of Greek sculpture and architecture in color. So, as I say, it is better to leave such questions alone.

Even the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles, the quintessence and prime example of classical Greek tragedy, is not above this kind of suspicion once one indulges it. The Corinthian messenger, who comes to tell Oedipus of the death of his supposed father, Polybus, at Corinth, replies to Oedipus' assurance of a reward for his trouble that indeed that was what he came for—"that I might be a bit well-off when you came home." This is not only not sublime of the old gentleman, it is undignified and crude. And then he holds back information—that he did not

himself rescue the baby Oedipus from exposure—which would endanger his profit. The Corinthian messenger is not a benevolent and high-minded old gentleman but something of a scoundrel. The translators normally powder over this quality by ennobling his diction beyond recognition; nevertheless he is after profit and evidently on false pretenses. True, he is frank about his motive and his being found out in a misrepresentation scarcely ruffles him, but this may only make him a disarming scoundrel, of the kind Corinth produced both in fact (say Periander) and in legend (say Sisyphus). It is a short and tempting jump to the conclusion that if you scratch the Corinthian messenger you are faced with something like W. C. Fields.

Still, I suspect he is less an individual "character" than the type of the ingratiating slicker from the big wicked city of Corinth, since he is played against the local Theban rustic who did rescue the baby Oedipus. The dialogue between the two still has flavor as a burlesque contrast between the city slicker and the rustic, and to the Athenian audience it may well have had a still higher flavor as a contrast between the Corinthian type and the Theban or Boeotian type; but the extraordinary thing is that on the stage it does not compromise the climax or catastrophe of the play, in the midst of which it occurs, but rather heightens and intensifies it. It becomes not so much a question of comic "relief" as of heightening the climax by contrast or discord, of saving the initial tension or momentum from audience fatigue by a quick change of tone, by shock, so that the climax or catastrophe may be launched with a full and fresh impact. It is before such moments especially that change is "required." After the terrible exit of Jocasta, when the worst is yet to come, there is suddenly an ambiguous chorus on the topic that if Oedipus is indeed a foundling and a bastard, at least he may be the bastard of some god. If this is taken as "sublime" in the straight sense and not as the horrifying *scherzo* I think it is, it is the lamest and most frigid piece of sublimity I know of in Greek. As a *scherzo* it goes very well and dramatically on the stage, but the exact proportion of bland to bitter in its humor I shall never know, nor how the dead serious parts of the play may be "modulated" so as to answer to modulation in the "light" parts, nor what the proportion is of light to dark. What, for

example, is the exact tone of Creon's defense of his motives—which are actually not murderous but are as sordid and reasonable as those of the Corinthian messenger? If he is the average angle-worker, he does not, as a moral foil to Oedipus, set off the *hybris* of Oedipus but rather his greater moral scale. And then where are we?

It would still be well worth the trouble to investigate "how far" Greek tragedy too is subject to the general law of required change, or rather how far it goes beyond what is actually required in change, how far the "shock tactics" (*ekplexis*) of Aeschylus were exploited by him and his successors. But the investigation would involve, on little but the most treacherous internal evidence, a total reinterpretation of Greek tragedy—its content, its dramaturgy, its style down to the least details.

With the very slight departures I made from unity of tone in a production of the *Oedipus Rex* by students, and one of the *Agamemnon* with adequately varied music by J. A. Huff, their vitality for the boards was, by that little, increased so much, that I have given up, appalled at the thought of the huge life that is very probably latent in the originals. It is as if I had seen or thought I saw the Sleeping Fury wink at me.

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# ENTR'ACTE ENTERTAINMENT AT DRURY LANE AND COVENT GARDEN, 1750-1770

by

DONALD J. RULFS

On May 20, 1756, David Garrick presented *Hamlet* at Drury Lane with Charles Holland playing the Prince. The intermission following Act II was filled with a hornpipe, and, at the end of Act V, Miss Rousellet and Mr. Lebrun completed the catharsis of the tragedy by dancing a minuet. How strange this seems today when those attending a Shakespearean tragedy arrive only a little less solemnly than churchgoers on a Sunday morning, spend the intermissions in quiet discussion of the merits of the production, and greet the final curtain with subdued applause (at least until the star appears). *Hamlet* is now a "classic" and must be revered.

The London playgoer of the latter part of the Eighteenth Century, however, would have been disappointed and even chagrined had he not been regaled with the variety and abundance of entr'acte entertainment which an examination of the Drury Lane and Covent Garden playbills, from 1750 through 1770, reveals. This surfeit of entertainment was not instituted at the time, but was a natural outgrowth of the entr'acte variety preceding it. Its most obvious forerunner, the Elizabethan jig, was thoroughly examined by Baskervill,<sup>1</sup> although brief discussions of it had appeared previously in several of the general works on the Elizabethan theatre. By the turn of the Seventeenth Century, something more than jigs was being proffered: at the end of a play songs and dances, called ballets, carols, pastourelles, free-man's songs, and wooing dialogues;<sup>2</sup> and clownish types, such as "the foreigner," "the sailor," "the collier," "the peddler," and "the rogue" had already evolved as a result of the popularity of the jig.

<sup>1</sup> Charles R. Baskervill, *The Elizabethan Jig* (Chicago 1929).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33.

One of the most popular of the sixteenth-century clowns was Richard Tarlton, famous for his extemporal remarks and songs, especially at the conclusion of a play.<sup>3</sup> Upon his death in 1588, Will Kemp tried to fill his shoes, but unfortunately for Kemp, the early seventeenth-century playgoer developed a less tolerant attitude toward this form of entertainment because of its increasing tendency toward indecency. Baskervill cites Hamlet's statement regarding Polonius: "He's for a jig or a tale of bawdry" (Act. II, sc. ii), which line served as the title of an article by W. J. Lawrence in *The Times Literary Supplement* of July 3, 1919. Mr. Lawrence concerned himself with the state of the jig at this particular time, citing an "Order for suppressing of Jigges at the ende of Playes" which had been issued by the General Session of the Peace at Westminster on October 1, 1612, but which the players had cleverly circumvented by presenting the jig during an intermission instead.

Even though the jig from time to time fell into disrepute, it continued to serve as a thread in the development of entr'acte entertainment. Mr. Montague Summers indicates that

. . . after the Restoration the jig assumed a new and more serious complexion, and came eventually to be dovetailed with the play itself, instead of being given at the fag end of the entertainment. . . . Indeed all extrinsic songs in dialogue, however serious the theme, were considered jigs.<sup>4</sup>

Baskervill calls attention to such features of the Restoration drama as the masquelike pastoral scenes at the beginning and end, and between the acts, of John Crowne's *Calisto* (1675); the pastoral dialogues between the acts of George Powell's *The Cornish Comedy* (1696); and Pierre Motteux's burlesque, *The Loves of Mars and Venus*, between the acts of Edward Ravenscroft's *The Anatomist* (1697).<sup>5</sup> Pepys also mentions entr'acte entertainment at a performance of Mrs. Catherine Phillips' *Horace* on January 19, 1669:

Lacy hath made a farce of several dances—between each act, one: but his words are but silly, and invention not extraordinary, as to the dances: only some Dutchmen come out of the mouth and tail of a Hamburgh sow.

<sup>3</sup> Wilhelm M. A. Creizenach, *The English Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (London 1916), p. 312.

<sup>4</sup> Montague Summers, *The Works of Aphra Behn* (London 1915), III, 477.

<sup>5</sup> Baskervill, *op. cit.*, p. 154, n. 4.



Furthermore, at the very end of the century, we find the stage historian, James Wright, complaining that

... the present Plays with all that shew can hardly draw an Audience, unless there be the additional Invitation of a *Signor Fidele*, a *Monsieur L'Abbé*, or some such foreign Regale expressed in the Bottom of the Bill.<sup>6</sup>

Such allusions definitely indicate a burgeoning of entr'acte entertainment which continued to increase through the first half of the Eighteenth Century and which by 1750 had become a well-established phenomenon on the London stage.

The entertainment offered at Drury and Covent Garden between 1750 and 1770 may be classified, in order of popularity, as follows: dances, songs, ballads, performances of children, offerings on musical instruments, recitations, and interludes. Among the simpler dances, performed by one or two persons, the hornpipe, the minuet, and the louvre (similar to the minuet) were very popular. These were all offered regularly regardless of the setting, the theme, or the atmosphere of the play with which they were presented. The popularity of the hornpipe is attested by a news item of 1762 cited by Allardyce Nicoll:

Thursday night there was a great riot at Covent Garden playhouse, without the least plea or pretense whatever, occasioned by the gentry in the upper gallery calling for a hornpipe, though nothing of the sort was expressed in the bills. They went so far as to throw a quart bottle and two pint bottles upon the stage, which happily did no mischief, but might have been productive of a great deal.<sup>7</sup>

A second and more elaborate kind of dance, in which French and Italian performers were featured almost exclusively, appeared on the playbills as "Pantomime Dances." Apparently, these had some very slight plot and usually called for six or seven performers to whom character parts were assigned. As this type of dance was more popular at Drury Lane than at Covent Garden, the performances mentioned here are from Drury playbills. On October 22, 1754, Signor and Signora Sabatini, in their initial appearance on the English stage, danced "Li Pescatori Italiani; or, the Italian Fishermen" in the second-act inter-

<sup>6</sup> James Wright, *Historia Histrionica* (London 1699), p. 9. Reprint by E. W. Ashbee, *Occasional Fac-Simile Reprints of Rare Curious Tracts of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London 1868-1872).

<sup>7</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama, 1750-1800* (Cambridge, England 1927), pp. 6-7.

# Theatre Royal in *Drury-lane*,

This present *Tuesday*, being the 14th of *October*, 1760

## The Careless HUSBAND.

Lord *Foppington* by Mr. OBRIEN,

Sir *Charles Easy* by Mr. HAVARD,

Lord *Morelove* by Mr. PALMER,

Lady *Easy* by Mrs. PRITCHARD,

Lady *Graveairs* by Mrs. KENNEDY,

(*Bring the Second Time of her appearing on That Stage.*)

*Edging* by Mrs. CLIVE,

Ly. *Betty Modish* Miss PRITCHARD.

End of Act II. a NEW Pantomime DANCE, call'd

The MAD DOCTOR,

By Signor TIOLI,

(*Being the First Time of his appearing on That Stage.*)

Miss BAKER, and Others.

To which will be added

## HARLEQUIN's Invasion.

With Additions and Alterations.

*Harlequin* by Mr KING,

The Other CHARACTERS by

Mr. YATES,

Mr. BRANSBY, } Mr. BURTON, } Mr. VAUGHAN,

Mr. MOODY, } Mr. CLOUGH, } Mrs BENNET,

Mr. BLAKES, } Mr. PACKER, } Miss POPE, &c.

The VOCAL PARTS by

Mr. Champnes, Mr. Fawcet, Miss Young, &c.

The DANCES by

Sig Grimaldi, Sig. Giorgi, Miss Baker, &c.

And a New Hornpipe by Miss Dawson.

\* \* There can be no Admittance into the Orchestra.

To-morrow The ALCHEMIST.

Courtesy of the Theatre Collection, New York Public Library

Playbill, Drury Lane, October 14, 1760.

Performance of Colley Cibber's *The Careless Husband* showing entr'acte entertainment.

mission of Mrs. Centlivre's *The Eusie Body*, and followed the end of the play with "Il Maestro di Capella; or, the Mus'c Master." On October 12, 1758, the famous Giuseppe Grimaldi, assisted by Mrs. Vernon, Mrs. Preston, and others, made his debut between the first and second acts of *Richard III* with "The Millers." A student of pantomimes, M. W. Disher, described his performance as follows: "He entered asleep on an ass which was stolen from under him, and he betrayed a joy like that of Sancho at its recovery." Also, Disher indicated that a critic, pointing up the fact that Grimaldi was regarded purely as a dancer, said that "Grimaldi is a man of great strength and agility. He indeed treads the air. If he has any fault, he is rather too comical." Shortly after this, Grimaldi was appointed "Maitre de Ballet" at Drury Lane.<sup>8</sup> Among the more popular pantomimic dances he offered there, were:

"The Prussian Camp," March 3, 1759, following David Mallet's *Eurydice*.  
 "The Italian Gardiner," October 6, 1759, following Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*.

"The Mad Doctor," October 14, 1760, second-act intermission of Cibber's *The Careless Husband*.

"The Colliers," October 24, 1760, first-act intermission of *Every Man in His Humour*.

"The Lilliputian Camp," March 12, 1767, second-act intermission of Colman's *The English Merchant*.

The French and Italian artists greatly favored another group of dances, those whose titles referred to countries of Europe and which offered excellent opportunities for elaborate costuming. This type of dance was well liked at both Drury Lane and Covent Garden:

#### *Drury Lane*

"Scots Dance," May 1, 1753, following *Hamlet*.

"Spanish Dance," December 18, 1758, fourth-act intermission of *The Merchant of Venice*.

"A New Dutch Comic Dance," September 25, 1761, following *The Way of the World*.

#### *Covent Garden*

"Roast-Beef of Old England," April 21, 1759, first-act intermission of the Reverend John Home's *Douglas*.

"The Highland Reel," April 28, 1768, following *King Lear*.

<sup>8</sup> M. W. Disher, *Clowns and Pantomimes* (Boston and New York 1925), p. 89.

It should be noted here that the above "Spanish Dance" ran also for two months between the acts of various types of plays.

In the field of ballet, Covent Garden far outshone Drury Lane. The first dance of this sort presented there during our period was devised by Monsieur Guerini and Mademoiselle Capdeville and entitled "The Animated Statues." It was performed at the conclusion of Congreve's *The Double Dealer* on March 4, 1756. Since the majority of the ballets had rather large casts and a longer running time than other forms of entr'acte variety, they were usually given at the end of the play. For example, "The Thrashers," which concluded James Thomson's *Tancred and Sigismunda* at Covent Garden on October 14, 1758, had a cast of thirteen dancers, and the "Hungarian Gambols" and "Crosques" at the end of *Venice Preserved* on March 9, 1761, at the same theatre, had a cast of twenty-two. Among the ballets most frequently performed in 1762 were: "The Taylors," "The Animated Statues," and "The Pleasures of Spring"; and in 1765 the favorites were: "The Garland," "The Venetian Gardiners," and "The Village Roms."

The songs, like the dances offered as entr'acte entertainment, were of great variety, but they differed in one important way from the dancing: almost all the artists were English and they sang only English compositions. The Londoners must have been adamantly insular in this respect as is evidenced by a criticism of Thomas Norris, who was appearing at Drury Lane in January, 1763:

His voice, the upper part in particular, is fine, but feigned. We know not whether the fault is to be attributed to a falseness of taste in his master or himself; but his manner is perfectly Italian, and the expression (if it can be so called) of his words, utterly unintelligible."<sup>9</sup>

John Beard made his first appearance as a soloist at Drury Lane on May 4, 1753, when he was billed for "general singing" at the end of Act III of *The Country Wife*. On December 26 of the same year he filled the first-act intermission of Lillo's *George Barnwell* with a similar entertainment; on April 1, 1754, he sang "Rise Glory Rise" by Thomas Arne at the end of Act I of Otway's *The Orphan*; and two years later, on May 5, 1756, he

<sup>9</sup> *Theatrical Review* I (1763), 38.

offered "Holy and Fair" following Act I of Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*. Paul Vaillant states that in 1753 Beard was favorably received as was Miss Norris:

... I confess myself no judge of Musical Performers, but it appears to me from the singing of Mr. Beard and Miss Norris, that Sound and Sense are not incompatible, for while they charm the Ear with Melody, they convey the Meaning of the Poet so as to gratify the Understanding.<sup>10</sup>

Duets were featured as well as solos. At Drury Lane, Beard and the popular Miss Polly Young sang "When Phoebus the Tops of the Hills Does Adorn" at the conclusion of *Every Man in His Humour* on March 31, 1757, and Joseph Vernon and Miss Young were advertised for the general singing during the intermissions of Mrs. Centlivre's *The Wonder* on April 5, 1763.

Mr. Vernon's renditions were variously criticized over a ten-year period. In January of 1763, the *Theatrical Review* critic said of his performances at Drury Lane:

Mr. Vernon having been so long absent, claims some notice in this place. We know not in his singing which to admire most, his peculiar delicacy, exquisite taste, or sensible expression; of which it is certain he possesses them all to a most eminent degree.<sup>11</sup>

Three years later, however, Hugh Kelly in *Thespis*, when referring to Vernon said:

Did he, indeed, ne'er generously rise  
Beyond *Tom Tale*, or the *London Cries*,  
With which of late, so dead to every shame,  
He meanly pimp'd for prostituted fame.<sup>12</sup>

The following year, Kelly himself was attacked for this criticism. John Brownsmith, using two of Kelly's own lines from *Thespis*, wrote:

Vernon, it seems, with all his arts,  
And pow'r of softening other hearts;  
Altho' 'he's blest with such a strain,  
As charms us to the verge of pain.'  
That flinty breast [Kelly's] can ne'er alarm,  
That's proof against all music's charm.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Paul Vaillant, *The Present State of the Stage in Great Britain and Ireland* (London 1753), p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> *Theatrical Review* I (1763), 36.

<sup>12</sup> Hugh Kelly, *Thespis; or, a Critical Examination into the Merits of All the Principal Performers Belonging to Drury-Lane Theatre* (London 1766), p. 18. "London Cries" is a reference to a popular recitation which Vernon apparently had set to music.

<sup>13</sup> John Brownsmith, *The Rescue; or, Thespian Scourge, Being a Critical Enquiry into the Merit of a Poem Intituled 'Thespis'* (London 1766), p. 13.

Such controversy over an entr'acte performer shows what a long but continuous road the jig had travelled since Elizabethan days.

Closest to the jig was the ballad singing offered at both the theatres. On April 1, 1754, at Drury Lane, Beard sang a "Ballad by Particular Desire," at the end of Act III of *The Orphan* although the playbill carried no title; and at Covent Garden, on February 28, 1767, Mr. Baker sang "An Original Sheep-Shearing Ballad" at the end of Charles Johnson's *The Country Lasses*.

Curiously enough, the audience of this period displayed a particular relish for the theatrical efforts of children. The children were featured almost exclusively in dances and were usually either the offspring or pupils of the famous dancers at both theatres. Evidently dances were created especially for them. At Drury Lane, on November 7, 1755, Little Pietro and others danced "The Lilliputian Sailors" at the end of Garrick's *The Fairies*. On the following December 18 and January 6 the playbills announced a pantomime dance by The Children during the first-act intermission of *Henry VIII*. Signor Sabatini the Younger danced with his parents at the end of *The Fairies* at Drury Lane for eight years, beginning on February 3, 1755. At Drury Lane, also, Master and Miss Swinson made their appearance on May 5, 1756, with a louvre and a minuet at the end of Act IV of *Love's Last Shift*; Mr. Leviez, on April 18, 1761, was assisted in a minuet by "A Young Lady His Scholar" at the conclusion of *Douglas*; and Miss Collet and Miss Giorgi danced a minuet on May 26, 1767, following *Cymbeline*. The Misses Collet and Giorgi were designated on the playbills as scholars of Signor Giorgi.

Toward the end of the list of entr'acte variety entertainments, there are the renditions on musical instruments. In 1752, Miss Roxana Termagant, the pseudonymous editor of the short-lived periodical *Have-at-You-All*, said of these:

I never go to any entertainment without a design of benefiting my readers by it: The different modulations of the instruments, which I had heard before at Ogle's, and which filled up the intermission of the play, made me reflect on the near affinity between the Actors and the Music.

In developing this observation, Miss Termagant compared such actors as Garrick to "a double-keyed Harpsichord struck by the

nice finger of an Handel."<sup>14</sup> In contrast to her approval of the renditions and their suitability, a letter to the editor in the *London Chronicle* of March 27, 1767 complained that:

Here is a gross imperfection in our theatrical representations, but an imperfection that fortunately is not incurable. A detached chorus, or, instrumental music adapted to the subject of the play, between the acts, would have more than one happy effect, by recruiting the spirits, and by preserving entire the tone, if not the tide of passion. The music, that comes first, ought to accord with the tone of the preceding passion, and be gradually varied till it accords with the tone of the passion that is to succeed in the next.

As musical interludes were rarely listed on the playbills, it cannot be ascertained if this critic's suggestions were ever followed. They probably were not.

Some typical instrumental entertainments at Drury Lane were: Monsieur Karmazin's rendition of a concerto on the bassoon between the second and third acts of *Macbeth* on October 16, 1752; Mr. Parry's harp solo, "Sir Watkins Delight," which filled the third-act intermission of *Every Man in His Humour* on March 31, 1757; and Mr. Burney's concerto for the harpsichord following Act II of Garrick's *The Country Girl* on January 1, 1767.

The least popular of all the forms of entertainment were the recitations or declamations, such as John Moody's delivery of "Teady Wallougham's Whimsical Roratorical Description of a Man o'War and Sea-Fight with Hebernian Notes on the Whole" at the end of Act II of Christopher Bullock's *Woman Is A Riddle* at Drury Lane on April 24, 1761. One piece, however, proved very popular during 1763 and for several years thereafter. It was "A Comic Paraphrase on the Seven Ages of Shakespeare," written by George Alexander Stevens and published in part in the *Theatrical Review*.<sup>15</sup> It was being delivered at Drury Lane by Thomas King as late as April 12, 1769, when he gave it at the conclusion of Bickerstaffe's *The Maid of the Mill*.

King's rival at Covent Garden was Ned Shuter, whose "Cries of London" became popular and even brought forth a passing comment in the *Theatrical Review*:

. . . Besides, for a mere Comedian to forego Comedy for Tragedy is

<sup>14</sup> *Have-at-You-All*, I (1752), 87.

<sup>15</sup> *Theatrical Review*, I (1763), 235-237.

unnaturally absurd: as soon should Ned Shuter give up his London-Cries to any of the ancient Choruses.<sup>16</sup>

On April 14, 1764, Shuter was speaking his "new, serious, post-haste observations," according to the playbill, in the form of "A Journey to Paris" at the end of *Every Man in His Humour*, and on April 25, 1766, he spoke a new epilogue while seated on an ass at the end of Southerne's *Oroonoko*. It was doubtless such antics that called forth Francis Gentleman's estimate of Shuter in 1770:

Mr. Shuter, [is] a luxurious performer, who has great humour, both in looks and expression, but wants chastity of character, and diligence; the former often runs him into buffoonery, the latter into imperfectness and nonsense.<sup>17</sup>

Another, but less well-known, protagonist of declamation at Drury Lane was Robert Baddely, who, on May 7, 1769, presented "Bucks Have at Ye All; or, the Picture of a Play House" following Act II of *The Beggar's Opera*, and on August 14 of the same year he gave "A Recipe How to Stand Buff 'Gainst a Scolding Wife, with the Efficacious Qualities of Liverpool Ale; In a Short Oration, and Song, in the Character of Toby Topsail and Honest Tar" following Act IV of Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*.

Interludes, short pieces spoken between the play and the afterpiece, were similar to the regular entr'acte renditions. One of the most popular of these was Garrick's "The Farmer's Return from London," presented at the end of Vanbrugh's *The Mistake* on March 20, 1762. Of this Benjamin Victor wrote:

*The Farmer Returned*, a Dramatick Interlude. The writing and acting of that Character by Mr. Garrick, is another Instance of his incomparable, universal Genius. This little piece is a pleasing Picture of a Farmer and his Family, to whom on his return from *London*, he gives a humorous Description of the *Coronation*.<sup>18</sup>

Besides Garrick himself, others spoke interludes at Drury Lane. Richard Yates was presented on March 31, 1767 doing "The Modern Traveler" at the end of Vanbrugh's *The False Friend*,

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>17</sup> Francis Gentleman, *The Dramatic Censor; or, Critical Companion* (London 1770), II, 493.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin Victor, *The History of the Theatres of London, from the Year 1760 to the Present Time* (London 1771), pp. 25-26.



and on April 16 of the following year. King offered the popular "Linco's Travels, with His Particular Remarks on London" at the conclusion of *The Merchant of Venice*.

Needless to say, an 8:40 curtain was an impossibility during this period of abundant theatre fare. The play began at six o'clock, and a definite time was allotted to each entr'acte performance. John Brownsmith, the prompter at the Haymarket, supplies us with the timetable in his book, *The Dramatic Time-Piece; or, Perpetual Monitor*, written in 1767. In his preface he states that:

. . . by only allowing seven Minutes between each Act for the intervening Music, they [the playgoers] will be certain of Their Time any Act will be over.<sup>19</sup>

Brownsmith gives the running time in minutes for each act of scores of plays, and for each play he designates the exact time at which the third and fifth acts will end. Though theatrical entertainment was intensive and varied in the Eighteenth Century, theatre attendance must have been a gay and leisurely experience.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in G. C. D. Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving* (New York 1920), I, 335.

A COMMENTARY ON THE  
"HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BOX SET"  
(*THEATRE ANNUAL*, 1945)

by

ORVILLE K. LARSON

The most recent attempt to trace the evolution of the box set in print is Professor John H. McDowell's interesting study published in *Theatre Annual*, 1945.<sup>1</sup> This article, entitled "Historical Development of the Box Set," professes to bring "into pictorial focus," with the aid of fourteen plates, "two general conclusions":

. . . First. The early box set did not appear immediately as a new form, but evolved from the traditional eighteenth-century flat wing set. Second. The present concept of the box set, with wings substantially lashed and braced, was the result of practical experimentation with old forms and the application of new ideas of rigging.

Since this is the only recent article on the subject, I find that it has achieved an importance which I am sure the author never meant it to have. His repeated use of such adverbs as "seemingly," "undoubtedly," and "apparently," along with the phrases "also suggests" and "was probably" in introducing many of the main points, leaves little doubt—in my mind at least—that Professor McDowell was speculating considerably. And yet, I find his ideas constantly being accepted without reservation or further investigation. Most recently, for example, Herbert Phillipi repeats the first part of McDowell's thesis practically word for word.<sup>2</sup>

The evolution of the box setting—if there was an evolution—is still a fertile area of investigation for the theatre historian but no attempt to describe an acceptable progression will be made in this brief discussion. The seemingly logical presentation of the

<sup>1</sup> John H. McDowell, "Historical Development of the Box Set," *Theatre Annual*, 1945, pp. 65-83. Unless otherwise specified all quotations are from this article.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Phillipi, *Stagecraft and Scene Design* (New York 1953), p. 21.

various plates in McDowell's article suggests a *possibility*; yet a great deal of his evolution appears hypothetical. Therefore, it seems necessary to review the main points of the study, pausing at various steps in the development suggested to discuss in detail some assumptions and also suggest other reasonable explanations for certain phenomena given therein.

## I

The traditional method of mounting a setting at the end of the Eighteenth Century was still the old baroque system of backdrop and equal number of side wings set parallel or slightly oblique to the footlights. Shifting was accomplished by either the old English system of shutters and grooves or by the French "classical" system of movable *chariots* and *fermes*. For the creation of interior settings, scene painters applied the principles of either simple one-point perspective or the more elaborate two- or three-point perspective to the wings, borders, and backdrop, creating the illusion of a room with solid walls and a ceiling. The few pieces of furniture necessary to the action of the play were moved on and off stage by hand, while all other furniture and such properties as are now designated as "set dressing" were painted right on the scenery.

Now early in the study we read:

Apparently, the first movement toward the establishment of a box set was an attempt to suggest a solid wall. This was accomplished by using the traditional wing set with wings painted so that they appeared to slant backward.

One must certainly agree that the scenic artists did attempt to suggest a solid wall, or an enclosed playing space, when painting an interior setting. That was the whole point of the art of perspective: to create the illusion of reality whether it be an interior or exterior setting. To me the whole problem of the box set is the problem of enclosing the playing space to give a greater sense of reality, and the development of the enclosed playing space was well on its way during the closing years of the Renaissance. Bernardo Buontalenti's designs for a theatrical performance at the wedding celebration of Ferdinando de Medici in Florence in 1589 indicate side walls and a back wall pierced with a large

door;<sup>3</sup> Vignola's diagram for the use of *periaktoi* as a scene shifting device, designates machinery to enclose the stage completely on three sides.<sup>4</sup> Other examples are numerous.

These Renaissance artists constantly strove for greater realistic effects. In order to simulate realism, while following the laws of perspective, they foreshortened and built up sections of their decorations in three dimensions, in a manner not unlike the practices of present-day American scene designers.<sup>5</sup> Serlio suggests that "sometimes it is necessary to make something rising or bossing out, which is made of wood."<sup>6</sup> Just how far these men went in their attempts toward realism is open to conjecture. However, the practical theatre man, Leone di Somi, who was stage manager and director of court theatricals for the Gonzaga family of Mantua in 1556, complains, in what would seem to be one of the earliest critical comments on realistic settings, that:

. . . although there is a certain beauty in seeing presented on the stage an open, well-appointed room, in which for example, a lover has an interview with a bawd, and although this gives a strong impression of verisimilitude, yet it goes contrary to reality . . . in that the room is lacking (as it must) a fourth wall . . . it appears to me rather awkward.<sup>7</sup>

As soon as a practical scheme for achieving perspective in drawing was worked out, this new art of "cheating the eye" superseded the older practice of simulating reality in three dimensions. The scenic artist became in effect an easel painter who treated his stage picture as one gigantic canvas. Endeavors to suggest space and solidity resulted in skillful accomplishments: great depths, enormous heights, and the plasticity of objects were suggested with facility and dexterity. The illusion of reality became the conventional aim regardless of the type setting to be designed.

It is therefore my belief that in the latter part of the Sixteenth Century there was a forward step toward the development

<sup>3</sup> Allardyce Nicoll, *The Development of the Theatre* (New York 1946), Fig. 291.

<sup>4</sup> Diagram printed in *Le Due Regole De'la Prospettiva di Jacomo Barozzi da Vignola, con i commentari del R. P. M. Egnatio Danti* (Rome 1583), p. 91.

<sup>5</sup> Donald Oenslager's setting for Noel Coward's *Present Laughter* and Stewart Chaney's interior for the more recent Lunt production of S. N. Behrman's *I Know My Love* are excellent samples for comparison. Both these designers foreshortened the side walls of their settings yet built up the architectural members of these walls, such as window frames, fireplaces, and cornices in three dimensions.

<sup>6</sup> Cited in A. M. Nagler, *Sources of Theatrical History* (New York 1952), p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> Leone Ebreo di Somi, *Dialoghi*, trans., Nicoll, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

of an enclosed playing space, which tried to depict reality by the use of "built-up" or three-dimensional scenery, and which was abruptly halted by the almost simultaneous codification of the principles of perspective drawing. Stage decoration was swiftly turned into *le trompe-l'oeil*. This development of the science of perspective, using the parallel side wing and the backdrop system, may very well have retarded the evolution of the enclosed playing space, or box set, for almost two hundred years.

The suggestion that the oblique wing was a logical step in the attempt to create greater verisimilitude by using the newly discovered art of perspective is also open to question. Could it not be that these wings were so placed better to mask the apertures between them? Andrea Pozzo, who repeatedly has been mistakenly credited with this innovation, supports the theory. In his instructions on the placement of the wings he explains:

Scenes for the Stage have very much Affinity with those lately described but the Point of Sight is not so easily found in these, and from the Obliquity of the Grooves in which the Scenes run, it comes to pass, that the right Lines which ought to appear parallel to the Lines of the Plan, must not be drawn parallel thereto, but oblique; which is a Work of some Difficulty. This indeed may be avoided, by fixing the Grooves parallel to the Proscene; as is usual in some Places, especially in *Germany*. Nevertheless, the *Italian* Manner has this Advantage: That those who are employ'd to prompt the Actors, and shift the Scenes, &c. are less exposed to Sight, in the Performance of their Business.<sup>8</sup>

## II

In part two of the McDowell study there is an attempt to identify technical drawings of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, which illustrate pivoting and flapping wings, with the development of the box set. By citing the ground plan for *Costanza e fortezza* designed by Giuseppe Galli-Bibiena in Prague (1723), which illustrates a series of flapping wings, and for *Candy Restored* (1641),<sup>9</sup> which diagrams pivoting wings, he suggests two technical systems which might have been used for the purpose of forming a solid side wall of the box set. One must

<sup>8</sup> From *On Scenes for the Stage* by Padre Pozzo, *A reprint from rules and examples of Perspective* (London 1707). Explanation of diagram No. 72.

<sup>9</sup> Design for *Costanza e fortezza* reproduced in Herbert Graf, *The Opera* (New York 1941), Plates 35, 36, and 37; for *Candy Restored* reproduced in Alexander Noyes, *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Theatre* (New York 1938, Figs. 110 and 111).

concede the possibility, but the probability is that they were not. Had the flapping wings been employed as illustrated in the *Costanza e fortezza* floor plan the result would have been a wall divided at regular intervals by a series of finlike partitions extending at right angles to the wall. The system of pivoting wings is more plausible but I am certain that, as outlined on the technical drawings for *Candy Restored*, it was never used for the purpose. When one pivots the wings indicated on the floor plan to form a solid wall, one discovers much overlapping of units.

This suggested step in the development of the box set does not appear to have much validity. The full flowering of the masters of perspective scenery, such as the Bibiena and the Galliari families, did not come until the middle of the Eighteenth Century. Is it logical to suppose that these master illusionists would concern themselves with a new method of achieving the appearance of reality when their system of side wings and backdrops was having such a phenomenal success? I think not. A more logical explanation of the introduction of the pivoting and flapping wings at the time is that they were designed to facilitate the speedy scene change, or *changement a vue*, essential to a good performance in baroque theatres.

### III

Plates 5 and 7 of the McDowell article were reproduced from Contant and Filippi's *Parallèle des principaux théâtres modernes de l'Europe et des machines théâtrales français* to illustrate the adaptation of the pivoting wings and the old French system of moving *chariots* and *ferme* as an important step in the evolution of the enclosed playing space. The floor plan and side elevation indicate a large stage floor with a box set in the foreground. The legend of the original drawing defines this set as a temple. Its rear wall is a *ferme* which is raised up through the stage floor from below; the side walls are made up of a series of pivoting wings attached to *chariots* which move on and off stage. Immediately behind the temple there is a large exterior setting, indicated as a rocky glen, which is an elaborate set-up of steps, ramps, and platforms, completely surrounded by a large sky cyclorama. It is true that this mechanism was used to

achieve a speedy transformation, and it must have worked very smoothly to strike the temple and reveal the glen in the twinkling of an eye, but it is apparent to anyone with technical experience that both scenes must have been set up when there was plenty of time on hand.

The premise at this point is that a second mechanism similar to the one used to strike the temple setting could easily have returned a new box setting. McDowell puts it:

... side wings could be drawn on stage simultaneously, ... the *ferme* ... could be brought up from below stage ... to join the wings, while a ceiling piece could be lowered to enclose the top of the set. Thus, in a matter of seconds, a complete room could be put on the stage with the rigging of an eighteenth-century flat wing set adapted for the purpose.

Once again one must admit the possibility of this system being so used, but I have found no evidence to indicate that an adaptation of the pivoting wings with the *chariots* system was ever used to move a box set onstage. Were we on solid ground at this point would it not be reasonable to expect to find this use of the *chariots* system frequently described by the late nineteenth-century French writers concerned with stage machinery, especially since it was a French system? But just the opposite is true. Contant and Filippi are the only ones who diagram the system, and then only as a mechanism to effect a transformation. E. Lauman in *La Machinerie au théâtre depuis les Grecs jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris 1897) ignores it completely; M. J. Moynet in *L'envers du théâtre; machines et décorations* (Paris 1873) mentions the *chariots* system in connection with spectacle plays but never mentions a box set or any development leading to it; Georges Moynet, in his monumental study on French stage machinery, *La machinerie théâtrale. Trucs et décor* (Paris 1893) seems to have missed this use of the *chariots* system completely. Nor will we find it described in connection with box sets in the section devoted to stage machinery in Edwin Sach's comprehensive survey of theatre architecture in Europe at the end of the century entitled *Modern Opera Houses and Theatres* (London 1897).

Richard Southern tells us that Charles Albert Fechter installed the *chariots* system in England when he took over the

Lyceum Theatre in London in 1863,<sup>10</sup> but it made little impression on the English producers. It was soon discarded for the old system of shutter and grooves. Had it been really efficacious in the French and British theatre it would have eliminated the "carpenter scenes" which the British critic, Percy Fitzgerald, complained of,<sup>11</sup> and rendered unnecessary the insertion of tableaux between sets to facilitate scene shifts on the stage which the French critic, L. Becq de Fouquières, claimed lengthened the playing time of a performance interminably besides confusing the plot.<sup>12</sup>

It must be pointed out, however, that there is some basis for assuming that experiments, using the *chariots* system to shift the box set were carried out. Alphonse Gosset in his *Traité de la Construction des Théâtres* (Paris 1886) published an unidentified drawing (Plate 9 of the McDowell article) which illustrates the *chariots* system being used to shift part of a box set. The rear wall of the set, operating on the principle of the shutter, was moved on and off stage by *chariots* while the side walls, standing free on the floor, were lashed to the back wall and supported on the downstage end by a stage brace. Gosset gives no clue as to the extent of use and McDowell does not elaborate. Thus, as tantalizing as the illustration is, one cannot base a whole mechanical development upon it, or on any other isolated drawing. The evidence is not there.

#### IV

Although modern box sets do not appear until 1867, occasional examples can be noted early in the Nineteenth Century. Madame Vestris is said to have used them in her London production of *Minister and Mercer* in 1834.<sup>13</sup> Charles Kean introduced New Yorkers to them in his production of *King Lear* at the

<sup>10</sup> Richard Southern, *Changeable Scenery, Its Origin and Development in the British Theatre* (London 1952), p. 217.

<sup>11</sup> Percy Fitzgerald, *The World Behind Scenes* (London 1882), p. 28. A "carpenter scene" was so called because it was a short scene played in front of an act curtain to give the stagehands or stage carpenters, as they were called, a chance to shift the scenery. A review of *The School for Scandal* in *The Theatre* (March 1882), p. 172 bitterly denounces the use of these insert scenes and calls for a return to the old methods of painted drops.

<sup>12</sup> L. Becq de Fouquières, *L'Art de la Mise-en-Scène* (Paris 1884), Chap. 30.

<sup>13</sup> *The Theatrical Observer*, No. 3791 (London, February 10, 1834).



Park Theatre in 1846.<sup>14</sup> As we read the critical reviews of these early settings, we get the impression that the producers were more interested in spectacle and verisimilitude for their own sakes than in the artistic contribution they could bring to a play. A review of the Vestris' production of *Court Beauties* in London in 1835 illustrates the point:

The sides of the setting were hung with beautiful tapestries and the ceiling of the scene was painted to represent the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and from the center there hung a massive crystal chandelier, with no less than fifty wax tapers burning in it. For the miscellaneous furniture and properties the chief curiosity shops in London . . . were searched . . . until the smallest item required was produced in keeping with the rest.<sup>15</sup>

Professor McDowell, commenting on the appearance of the modern box set says that:

. . . the modern box set did not really develop until the traditional methods of rigging were discarded and a *new system of lashed and braced flats was introduced*. With this the box set took on a new artistic meaning. [My italics]

This is the point in his development I have most often heard repeated and accepted without reservation. Yet, only a slight acquaintance with the accomplishments of the nineteenth-century stage technicians will suggest the fallacy of this statement. The implication is that we had to wait until these technicians invented the stage brace and developed the technical "know-how" of lashing flats together before the box set could become a workable unity with artistic meaning. It is hard to imagine that the technical skills which conceived such ingenious effects as the rocking ships in Meyerbeer's opera, *L'Africaine*, the appearance of the ghosts in Boucicault's *The Corsican Brothers*, or the escalator stages for the race horse scenes at the Union Square Theatre in New York in 1889<sup>16</sup> were unable to devise methods of bracing free standing flats to the stage floor. When has theatre progress ever had to wait upon technical development to achieve the effects demanded of it? When T. W. Robertson demanded a real-

<sup>14</sup> Wesley Swanson, "Wings and Backdrops," *The Drama Magazine*, January 1928, p. 109.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted from Charles E. Pearce, *Madame Vestris and Her Times* (London n.d.), p. 234. See also Ernest Bradley Watson, *Sheridan to Robertson* (Cambridge, Mass. 1926) for descriptive accounts of these early box sets.

<sup>16</sup> These settings and machines and many more elaborate stage effects are fully described and explained in Georges Moynet, *La machinerie théâtrale. Trucs et décor* (Paris 1893), Part Two.

istic room for *Caste*, produced in London in 1867, with solid walls and a ceiling, wooden doors with practical doorknobs, locks with practical keys, windows that opened and closed and even locked, the modern box set came into being. Here was a new kind of scenery with elements absolutely necessary to the action of the play. Realistic staging ceased being a fad, or an exercise in verisimilitude, it became a necessity. The creation of the box set was the inevitable result. Not until the playwright demanded that the setting share in the action of his drama and become an integral part of his play did the box set begin to have artistic meaning. And the invention of new stage hardware, such as the stage brace, can hardly be called a contributing artistic force.

In conclusion, I cannot bring myself to believe the evolution of the box set as Professor McDowell presents it. Although pictures, diagrams, and facts have been lined up in a *seemingly* logical order, the interpretation of them is a mixture of suppositions and implications which leave much unsaid. One cannot help but feel after reading the study that the evolution was all a mechanical and technical development. When the true story of the box set is written I venture to say that the historians will find that although there were earlier attempts at realistic interiors, which were primarily concerned with verisimilitude, the modern box set was not fully developed until the naturalistic playwrights appeared, nor did it acquire artistic meaning until these realistic playwrights demanded that the décor make an aesthetic contribution to their plays. The box set did not have to wait upon technical developments before it could appear, nor did it acquire artistic meaning as a result of those developments.

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## THE *COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE*, THE ACTORS' THEATRE

by

JOHN V. FALCONIERI

In general, the authors of histories of literature present an inadequate treatment of the *Commedia dell'Arte*. They infer that the *Commedia* was completely devoid of literary merit. Of course, there is a certain justification for their attitude, since the *Commedia dell'Arte* was not a written form of theatre, but to think of dramatic creations only as reading matter is to ignore the multifarious artistic disciplines required for stage representation. Such an approach is particularly deficient in studying the Sixteenth Century when the European theatre was assuming its modern form. The *Commedia dell'Arte* was an important development in the history of modern theatrical art and literature and, consequently, it seems necessary to re-evaluate the *Commedia* to give it the significance to which it is entitled.

Simultaneously with the Renaissance revival of the classical theatre the *Commedia dell'Arte* came into being. Its material was purely theatrical in substance. And because it had greater vitality than the written erudite drama it was able to discover, create and assess the theatrical values which were subsequently to be absorbed by the nascent national theatres of Europe.

The *Commedia dell'Arte* took root when minstrels, mountebanks and jesters became professional actors; when the stage left the movable platforms in the street for ballroom theatres and playhouses; when stage performances ceased being only side shows and stereotyped mystery plays and became presentations with artistic form and meaning; and when the theatre became an integral part of civil life, not just the passing fancy of a pedestrian. For this transition the actors of the masked comedy are mainly responsible, and their real contribution cannot be

understood without a more intense study of the fundamental nature of the *Commedia dell'Arte*.<sup>1</sup>

The usual definition of the *Commedia* is a masked comedy with fixed parts presenting plays of intrigue whose dialogue is mostly improvised. Based on this conception there are many studies concerning the influence of the *Commedia dell'Arte* on the Spanish, French and English theatre.<sup>2</sup> For example, a Spanish farce, the *entremés de repenle*, is replete with *Commedia* techniques, Lope de Vega's *gracioso* is derived from Arlecchino, and many English comedies and jigs use *scenari* plots. The adaptations of *Commedia* characters were utilized in many Elizabethan plays including Shakespeare, the French farceurs, and Molière. These dramatists also borrowed many techniques, masks and plots from the *Commedia*.

Although such studies are worthwhile, they lack a certain quality of subjectivity (necessary in any artistic criticism) and they add little to a true understanding of Lope, Molière and Shakespeare as dramatists and poets. By the same token, they make only a limited contribution to our knowledge of the *Commedia dell'Arte*.

The Italian masked comedy was a creature with a soul, with intangible qualities, possessing spiritual and artistic motivations which a dissection of the cadaver alone will never yield. These intangibles must be examined if a valid and just conception of this theatre is ever to be revealed. This is what I shall try to do.

<sup>1</sup> A start in this direction is evident in the *avant-propos* of the French translation of C. Miłachewski, *La Commedia dell'Arte* (Paris 1927); A. Cunill Cabanellas, "El estilo del actor en la comedia del arte," *Cultura*, Año II (1950), 6, pp. 41-76; G. Attinger, *L'esprit de la Commedia dell'Arte dans le théâtre français* (Paris 1950), pp. 443-449 *et passim*; and B. Croce, *Poesia popolare e poesia d'arte* (Bari 1930), pp. 503-514 (this chapter translated into English, *Theatre Arts Monthly*, December 1933, pp. 929-939).

<sup>2</sup> See G. T. Northup, Introduction to *Ten Spanish Farces* (Chicago 1922); E. B. Place, "Does Lope de Vega's Gracioso Stem in Part from Harlequin?," *Hispania*, XVII (1934) 257-270; O. J. Campbell, "The Two Gentlemen of Verona in Italian Comedy," *Studies in Shakespeare, Milton and Donne* (New York 1924), pp. 47-63; O. J. Campbell, "Love's Labour's Lost Re-studied," *Studies in Shakespeare, Milton and Donne* (New York 1935), pp. 3-45; C. Coulter, "The Plautine Tradition in Shakespeare," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 19 (1920) 66-83; H. D. Gray, "The Sources of the Tempest," *Modern Language Notes*, XXXV (1920), 321-330; F. Neri, *Scenari delle maschere in Arcadia* (Città di Castello 1913); W. Vollhardt, "Zur Quellenkunde von Shakespeares Sturm," *Beiblatt zur Anglia*, XXXVII (1926), 337-342; M. J. Wolff, "Shakespeare und die Commedia dell'Arte," *Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare-Gesellschaft*, XLVI (1910), 1-20; L. B. Wright, "Will Kemp and the Commedia dell'Arte," *Modern Language Notes*, XLI (1926), 516-520; F. A. Yates, *A Study of Love's Labour's Lost* (Cambridge, England 1926); and in particular K. Lea, *Italian Popular Comedy* (Oxford 1934), pp. 339-455 and W. Smith, *The Commedia dell'Arte* (New York 1912), pp. 170-199. There is one dissenter in O. P. Henneberger, *Proximate Sources for the Italianate Elements in Shakespeare* (University of Illinois 1927). G. Lanson, "Molière et la farce," *Revue de Paris*, 45 (1901), 129-153 and R. Lebeque, "La comédie italienne en France au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue de littérature comparée* (1950), pp. 5-24; L. Moland, *Molière et la comédie italienne* (Paris 1867) and I. A. Schwartz, *The Commedia dell'Arte and Its Influence on French Comedy in the Seventeenth Century* (Paris 1933).

A broader concept of the artistic values inherent in the *Commedia* is needed to appreciate its *fundamental* influence on Lope, Shakespeare, Molière and their contemporaries. This influence far transcends the mere borrowing of a fixed type, a *scenario*, a *gracioso*, a *lazzo* or two. It rests on the basic artistic conception which is the essence of the *Commedia dell'Arte* and which, lying beyond the scope of mathematical proof, must be sensed to be appraised.

Certain organizational innovations of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, important to the development of a mature theatre, have been partially neglected or improperly emphasized because it has been taken for granted that they have always existed. Although these innovations were partially present during the Middle Ages they were definitely established during the Renaissance, particularly by the masked actors. They are:

1. The creation of stable professional companies.
2. The inclusion of women in these companies.
3. The establishment of permanent theatre houses.
4. The creation of a theatrical tradition.

These four elements, though independent of any given play, have a direct effect on the artistic conception and, consequently, are absolutely essential to artistic theatrical creation. Let us examine all four in the order of presentation.

### *The professional companies:*

A distinctive and essential feature of the *Commedia dell'Arte* was the companies organized under legal contract. These companies were not composed of academicians, dilettanti, students and courtiers who presented erudite plays nor of lay brothers who presented religious pieces, but of men and women who, for the first time in Europe, made of the stage their trade, their profession and their life. That the comedians recognized this themselves was made evident by il Lasca when, in 1559, he wrote:

We go everywhere  
Playing the Bergamasque and the Venetian  
And reciting plays is our profession.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Translation of passage cited by E. Cocco, "Una compagnia nella prima metà del secolo XVI," *Giornale Storico*, 65 (1915), 50. See also S. D'Amico, *Storia del teatro italiano* (Milano 1936), p. 106.

Their prime motivation was monetary gain, earned only through the successful entertainment of the public, and naturally they felt impelled to develop their acting and staging techniques. A legally established company offered some guarantee of continuity and imparted a sense of professional dignity which actors had previously not possessed. The well-knit organization was able to deliver a more polished performance in the recital of the extempore plays because its members had come to know each other's mannerisms and idiosyncrasies thereby enabling them to maintain an illusion through the fluent succession of the actors' parts. It is in this way that external organizational aspects may directly influence internal artistic creation in the theatre. The comedians also recognized this, and only under the most dire circumstances did individual members leave one company to join another. To prevent or discourage the practice company contracts provided severe penalties. The earliest recorded contract (1545) stipulates:

. . . and if during this association, one or two or more of the members of the company take it to their fancy to leave the company and strand the rest in great damage and shame to themselves, that therefore and in such case, he or those who leave, in addition to the penalties herein stated, must forfeit all claims to the money that may be contained in the above mentioned strongbox and that the forfeited money shall be equally divided among those comrades who remain fraternally united and not separated from the company.

Item, that if any of the members leave the company, that he or they, in addition to losing their share of what may be in the strongbox, must incur a fine of 100 lire. . . .<sup>4</sup>

The tenor of these contracts is evidence of the *capocomico's* desire for fraternal association among the players, a prerequisite for constant and successful mimic execution.

### *The inclusion of women in the companies:*

Although there are instances during the Middle Ages when women took special parts in plays sanctioned by the Church, usually they were not permitted to act. Women's parts were played by men or adolescents costumed as women. Shortly before

<sup>4</sup> Translated from E. Cocco, *op. cit.*, pp. 57-58.

1560 women began to appear with Italian companies.<sup>5</sup> Today, when the consequence of this innovation is such a commonplace, we should not lose sight of the innovation nor of its effects. We must recognize the tremendous repercussions the emancipation of women had on the development of theatrical art. How they have enhanced the theatre and the art of the stage is so obvious that I shall not consume time and space with explications.

### *Establishment of playhouse:*

During the Middle Ages and early in the Renaissance, cathedrals, hospital and inn courtyards, corrals, city squares and streets were all used for various types of performances. Then, with the revival of antiquity, came the first theatre buildings which were modeled after classical examples. At first these theatres were used exclusively for the presentation of erudite written plays, but as the *Commedia dell'Arte* assimilated certain cultural elements and placed them into its popular mold, it, too, found its way into palace theatres and into playhouses which the comedians themselves often were instrumental in constructing. It was they, not the academicians and humanists, who carried the new stage (still prevalent today) to all parts of Europe. In Spain, for example, the Italian troupes helped remodel corrals and construct new theatres in permanent localities. It was the slow process of establishing the tangible environment of an intangible art. These permanent stages were monuments to the new art and they indicated to each passerby that this art form had become part of his life.

### *The theatrical tradition:*

The companies and playhouses contributed to the development of a fast-growing, theatre-conscious public which began to accept and support a permanent stationary theatre. The seed of theatrical tradition was sown. Only when it became deeply rooted could pure theatre pass into the realm of literature, that is, could poets and dramatists find in the theatre a proper, adequate and

<sup>5</sup> P. Cecchini, *Breve discorso intorno alle commedie, commedianti et spettatori* . . . (Vicenza 1614), p. 16, "non sono 50 anni che si costumano donne in scena." See also L. Riccobini, *Histoire de l'ancien théâtre italien* (Paris 1728), p. 42; F. S. Quadrio, *Storia et ragione d'ogni poesia* (Milano 1744), III, 240.

*remunerative* field for their literary efforts. It must be apparent to every student of the theatre that Shakespeare, Lope de Vega, Molière and many others wrote within an established tradition. This was another contribution of the Italian comedians and their followers whose vicissitudes can be traced by the theatre historian.

So far we have dealt only with the external or tangible contributions of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, but a far more significant story lies in the analysis of the internal or artistic contributions of the masked comedians. There are intrinsic values in the *Commedia* which conventional literary norms are unable to evaluate. Furthermore, through them the *Commedia* is deprived of many other qualities—pictorial, architectonic, musical and choreographic—and, above all, its artistry in acting. The *Commedia* cannot be criticized like a poem, a novel, or even a piece of dramatic literature for which only an author and a reader are required. A Shakespearean tragedy can be appraised without seeing it performed on a stage, but this is an impossibility with the material of the *Commedia* for there is nothing to read except a sketchy *scenario* and a few *lazzi*, its poorest and least important components. A genre possessing so many different elements and requiring certain external aids like a physical theatre, apparatus, actors and a tradition must be considered as a discipline in itself, not as a stepchild of literature.

The comedians made no claims nor had any pretensions to literary production; they were not interested even in attempting it. Basilio Locatelli, who gathered the manuscripts of 103 *scenari* of 1618 and 1622, writes in his preface to the collection:

. . . And if in these themes I have not observed all the desirable precepts of poetic art, remember that they are intended for extempore representation and so depend upon the actor's skill, for the player's function is one thing and the poet's another.<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that these comedians were concerned only with the art of the stage and not with the aesthetics of the written page. They were not poetizing; they were acting and were well aware of it.

Leaving it to those more qualified to consider the musical and pictorial elements, we dwell here upon the essence of the

<sup>6</sup> Cited by Lea, *op. cit.*, p. 136.



*Commedia dell'Arte* which lies in the *creative expressiveness of the actors*, to coin a phrase, in their *sense of theatricality*. Because of its very nature a description of this artistry along aesthetic lines is extremely difficult. The dance and song, the pantomime, the delivery of lines, the acting all must perish immediately upon production. What would be required is a cinematographic record on sound film. Lacking this, the study of this invisible art can be approached only indirectly. If fifty years from now we were confronted with the total destruction of all Charlie Chaplin's films, how could we appraise him as an actor? His art would be invisible and we would be compelled to have recourse to secondary accounts, and to other indirect means. This is the basic problem in respect to our appraisal of the *Commedia dell'Arte*. Fortunately, however, indirect sources are infinite, not only in contemporary reports but also in what can be deduced from the physical remains of the *Commedia*; from a history of its companies, from a study of the state of the European Theatre before and after its inception.

The extent to which the European public, from St. Petersburg to Seville, from London to Naples, was compelled by the *Commedia's* lure, its influence on the theatre that followed, its inspiration to countless painters, musicians and writers, and its varied success for two and one half centuries attest to some internal artistry or aesthetic sensitivity. The contemporary reports are too numerous to list. A few must suffice. Miclachewski writes:

Sorel said of them [the actors] that they were "instinctively expressive"; French writers insisted over and over again on the expressive value of each of Harlequin's postures. The Dutch had called the Italians "Postur-makers." A. Constantini, who wrote the biography of the actor Fiorilli, said that Fiorilli used to speak little and expressed himself with difficulty; "but nature, on the other hand, had endowed him with the amazing talent of expressing through the positions and postures of his body and through grimaces of his face all that he wished and, moreover, in the most original fashion." Speaking of the different body positions of Sacco, the Harlequin, J. Casanova said: "They are postures wrought with symmetry, foolish but spiritual, coarse but graceful, always funny and always revealing a state of soul in keeping with the situation and the subject portrayed." Barbieri speaks of certain comical characters whose appearance on stage was all that was needed to amuse the spectators, and who provoked laughter by each of their gestures even

the most simple. Garrick who had seen the Harlequin Bertinazzi (nick-named Carlino), strongly advised people to go see "the character and the expression of Carlino's back."<sup>7</sup>

In England, Thomas Kyd in *The Spanish Tragedy* (1559), said: "The Italian tragedians were so sharp of wit, that in one hour's meditation they could perform anything in action," and Richard Flecknoe remarks:

They are excellent help of imagination, most grateful deceptions of the sight, and gracefull and becoming Ornaments of the Stage, transporting you easily without lassitude from one place to another, or rather by a kinde of delightful Magick, whilst you sit still, does bring the place to you. Of this curious Art the Italians, this latter age, are the greatest masters. . .<sup>8</sup>

Fray Juan de Pineda has one of his characters in *Agricultura christiana* (1589) say:

I have gone on occasion to see plays, especially those of the Italians, who express themselves best and even impress others best with their effects; and I brought my wife, who, being a person of almost as good judgment as myself, understands Tuscan very well. But once we were at the theatre we spent the *real* that I had earned that day for our supper and after having ruminated over what we had heard at the play we spent the next day at the plays. . .<sup>9</sup>

In Spain most of the allusions, including several by Lope de Vega, deal with Zan Ganassa who headed a *Commedia dell'Arte* troupe there for at least ten years. G. Ottonelli reports that although Ganassa "was not perfectly understood, nevertheless, with that little that was understood he made the audiences laugh with ease,"<sup>10</sup> and states further that Ganassa performed an abundance of ridiculous acts, that he was graceful in manner and so modest that every virtuous listener was greatly delighted upon hearing him so that he easily won the affections of his audience.

After a study of contemporary paintings, drawings, frescoes and other illustrations of *Commedia* scenes, it has been asserted that:

<sup>7</sup> Translated from Miclachevski, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Flecknoe, "A Short Discourse of the English Stage," an essay written in 1664 and printed in J. E. Spingarn, *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford 1908), p. 96.

<sup>9</sup> Translation of a passage cited by A. Bonilla y San Martín, *Las bacantes o del origen del teatro* (Madrid 1921), p. 131.

<sup>10</sup> Translated from G. Ottonelli, *Della Christiana moderazione del Theatro* . . . (Firenze 1653). II, 37.

As the *commedia dell'arte* performance depended in the main upon the enactment of a situation fraught with action and business, we can observe from the illustrations that the body positions and gestures were vital factors in getting this comic business over. It is evident that the actors studied definite effects which were "sure fire" with the cosmopolitan audiences, and that they executed them with great finesse and elaboration. The actor, in stock dress, with effective gestures and movements, was the motivating feature of all *commedia dell'arte* performances.<sup>11</sup>

The key to the comedians' success, and their art, was their ability to transform whatever materials they had on hand (they dealt especially with the erudite comedies and *novelle*) into playable and stageable material, and furthermore, to convert a line or two, a *lazzo* perhaps, into an artistic moment. A specific example might be the shoe-eating scene in Chaplin's *Gold Rush*. This is a *lazzo*. The script would read something like a *scenario* and say, "Here the *lazzo* of the shoe." We could study that line for a millenium and it would never yield the genial scene that the great comedian made of it. Has any literary critic ever given credit to those actors who converted artless lines, like the *lazzo* of the fly, for instance, into little gems of acting that took Europe by storm?<sup>12</sup>

Their acting skill was so highly developed that the better companies produced every known type of play—the written tragedies and comedies of the *commedia erudita*, the tragedies, tragicomedies, pastorals and farces of the improvised theatre, and even the religious *autos* of Spain.

From their sense of theatricality these actors felt compelled to reduce the Horatian five-act plays into more stageable and effective three-act plays, the form which persists to this day. A five-act *scenario* is a rarity. They did not create individual characters but rather well-delineated fixed characters (masks), possessing certain universal attributes. Within these limits, or better, unrestrained by any limits, each actor gave his own interpretation. In other words, it was not an author's character being displayed but the virtuosity of the actor. Not the type of actor who developed later, like John Barrymore, Eleonora Duse and Sarah Bernhardt, but actors who portrayed masks like Charlie Chap-

<sup>11</sup> John H. McDowell, "Some Pictorial Aspects of Early *Commedia dell'Arte* Acting," *Studies in Philology*, XXXIX (1942), 47-64.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed account of a *Commedia dell'Arte* rehearsal, see A. M. Nagler, *Sources of Theatrical History* (New York 1952), pp. 257-259.

lin, Harold Lloyd and the more recent, Alec Guinness. This was an actors' theatre to which the spectators repaired to see a particular actor portray a familiar mask. It was the showmanship of the actors that attracted. The genre was created by actors not by authors. The actors wanted to entertain and did so through techniques which slowly developed into aesthetic forms, precisely because the comedians were free from any preconceived ideas about the manner of presentation and from any fixed script. Through experience alone they learned *what* would stimulate an audience and *how* they achieved it was their art.

Even the creation of the masks was no small accomplishment. The propagation and survival of a mask depended directly upon the creative imagination of the actor, upon the manner of his presentation and interpretation. He had to evolve, maintain and develop it through almost daily and continuous improvisation accomplished by greater imaginative efforts and greater creative impulse. It is no coincidence, therefore, that those masks which had the greatest popularity and durability were those portrayed by the greatest actors. Is the artistic genius involved in the creation of a fixed scenic mask (a plastic form), such as the creation of Scaramuccia by T. Fiorilli, Capitan Spavento by F. Andreini, Charlie Chaplin by Charles Spencer Chaplin, Cantinflas by Mario Moreno, etc., inferior to that which created Hamlet, Lysistrata or Mrs. Alving?

Unlike characters such as Falstaff, who will always be associated with their authors, these comic masks became the patrimony of the spectators, a condition understood by the actors who were obliged, if they were to succeed, to concentrate on distinctive and individual artistic expression. Compare, if you will, the medieval mountebanks and jugglers with Andreini, Ganassa, Fiorilli, Fiorillo, Biancolelli and the others, who created theatrical characters which have survived the centuries, who amazed Europe with their acting skill, and who made of the *Commedia dell'Arte* "a great synthesis of all the comic-imaginative freedom of an epoch, accomplished through the sublime expressive impulse of the actor."<sup>13</sup>

The actors' art of the theatre, which, as far as is known, started with the tradition of Ruzzante (Angelo Beolco) and

<sup>13</sup> Translated from Cabanellos, *art. cit.*, p. 63.

developed to its highest point by the actors of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, was carried to all of Europe by these same comedians. In every country they had their followers and exercised their influence.<sup>14</sup> What the predecessors and contemporaries of Shakespeare, Shakespeare himself, Lope de Rueda, Timoneda, Lope de Vega, the French farceurs and Molière saw in the popular theatre of the Renaissance was not a happy hunting ground for the gathering of superficial plots and sub-plots but rather a sense of theatre, an instinct for the theatrical which they learned not from the literary treatises of Horace, Scaliger, *et al*, but in the only way possible, from seeing, in the flesh, the performances of the ubiquitous comedians. Although the Italian erudite theatre inherited the same background as the popular theatre, it lacked glaringly the essential sense of theatricality despite the contributions of poets of the caliber of Tasso and Ariosto. Once the dramatic poets of Europe grasped the essence of the *Commedia dell'Arte* a new era of drama was born. Lope de Vega, Shakespeare, Molière and Goldoni caught the spirit of the masked comedians and molded it into poetic and literary form.

The *Commedia dell'Arte* established the actor-author tradition; its great actors developed the "theatre" and gave life to the stage; and what is more important, they transformed the technique or science of acting into a cultured and universal art. The Italian comedians also brought to Europe the organization of professional companies, helped, in many instances, to construct playhouses and enhanced the development of histrionic art by giving the theatre its first actresses. In short, the value of the popular Italian theatre of the Renaissance, the actors' theatre, was artistic and organizational rather than literary. The actors had converted dramatic theory into stageable plays and made it possible for all to see and enjoy them.

<sup>14</sup> For studies on the *Commedia dell'Arte* in England see footnote 2. I have in process of publication a study on the *Commedia dell'Arte* in Spain, and for France, in particular Molière, see Moland, *op. cit.*; A. Tilley, *Molière* (Cambridge, England 1921), pp. 54-57 *et passim*; F. Lotheissen, *Geschichte der französischen Literatur im XVII Jahrhundert* (Wien 1878), Part I, Sec. X; Lanson, *art. cit.*; P. Toldo, "Di alcuni scenari inediti della *Commedia dell'Arte* e delle loro relazioni col teatro di Molière," *Atti della R. Accademia delle Scienze* (Torino 1907), 43, 460-482; M. Trellove, *The Life of Molière* (New York 1905), p. 74 *et passim*; L. Chancerel, "Le comédien Molière et ses camarades italiens," *Théâtre* 4 (Paris 1945), pp. 11-40; G. Craig, *Theatre Arts Monthly*, October 1924 (Letter to the Editor), pp. 714-715; R. Matthews, *Molière, His Life and His Works* (New York 1926), pp. 54-63 *et passim*; R. Duhamel, *Le rire et les larmes de Molière* (Paris 1933), an imaginative work based on factual material; Schwartz, *op. cit.*; Lebléque, *art. cit.*; René Benjamin, *Molière* (Paris 1926), p. 51 *et passim*; Croce, *op. cit.*; and, in particular, Attinger, *op. cit.*

## BIOGRAPHY OF A LOST PLAY: *LION OF THE WEST*

by

FRANCIS HODGE

A'nt I the yaller flower of the forest! and I'm all brimstone but the head, and that's aquafortis! My name is Nimrod Wildfire—half horse, half alligator and a touch of the airthquake—that's got the prettiest sister, fastest horse, and ugliest dog in the District, and can outrun, outjump, throw down, drag out, and whip any man in all Kaintuck.

*Lion of the West* is probably the most famous “lost” play of the nineteenth-century American stage. Except for a few scattered fragments,<sup>1</sup> like the oft-quoted one above, nothing has yet been found of this acting piece, celebrated as it was in its quarter century of active life on the stage following its première at New York's Park Theatre on April 25, 1831. Yet, Colonel Nimrod Wildfire, “raw Kentuckian just come to Congress” and a genuine backwoods “screamer,” has survived the years. He lives today as a native myth of that period in American life when Davy Crockett, the real-life, mighty hunter, and tall-talker from West Tennessee, stalked the Halls of Congress and argued with Andrew Jackson about the best way to run a democracy.

Though lost, *Lion of the West*, or *The Kentuckian* as it was entitled when first produced in London on March 9, 1833, still has a remarkable biography. People saw it, were highly amused, and wrote about it in literary journals and newspapers. Its history illuminates not only current practices in playmaking and comedy acting in our native theatre in the 1830's but also American life—the real, the ideal, the romantic. Other native plays of the period, such as *Metamora* and Woodworth's *The Forest Rose; or, American Farmers*, have survived in print, but somehow the noble Indian and the down-East Yankee belong

<sup>1</sup>Quotations or summaries may be found in: the New York *Mirror*, October 1, 1831; *The Literary Gazette* (London), March 16, 1833; *The Athenaeum* (London), November 5, 1831; B. A. Botkin, *A Treasury of American Folklore* (New York 1944), pp. 13-27; Brand, Matthews, and Lawrence Hutton, eds., *Actors and Actresses of Great Britain and America* (extra-illustrated edition, New York Public Library), Vol. III, Part II.

only to the Nineteenth Century. Colonel Wildfire, however, is still very much alive: the spirit of open spaces and doer of big deeds with the indigenous knack of spinning a tall yarn, rich in florid imagination and language. Wildfire sprang full blown out of the early years when we were trying to identify our American-ness. Although he was not our first stage backwoodsman, he became the model for all subsequent ones.

Typical as it is in kind and structure, *Lion* has an individual personality which raises it above the ordinary. It was a prize play; it appeared in three distinct versions but always with Wildfire as the central character; and it was timely. Travelling and travellers were topical subjects for discussion in the 1820's and '30's, and the stage had been a popular showcase for these themes ever since Charles Mathews had first told stories, sung patter songs, and danced his string of annual, one-man comic entertainments including his famous—or infamous as many Americans thought—*Trip to America* in 1824. Like the Bop Hope "Road" comedy films of today, *Lion* was a "trip" play, and its hero followed the usual procedure by travelling to strange places. The first version found Wildfire in Washington; in the third he visited New York. The resourceful uncut diamond from Salt Licks was at home anywhere. He might kick over the teacups as he danced furiously at a Washington reception, but his native charm never failed him.

The "names" associated with the play are of even more interest. James Henry Hackett was its instigator and star actor after James Kirke Paulding, American satirist, invented Wildfire. Perhaps, with the exception of his cousin, Washington Irving, and of James Fenimore Cooper, Paulding had no peers in his success with native American materials and characters. *Metamora's* author, John Augustus Stone, put the second version together, and Bayle Bernard, a well-known English actor and writer of comedy, did the third. And always in the background of *Lion*, giving solid support and encouragement, were Prosper Wetmore and George Morris, the editors of the *New York Mirror*, America's 1830 *Saturday Review*.

It was, however, a "name" not hitherto associated with the theatre which furnished the chief publicity for the play: Davy Crockett. Davy and Wildfire were popularly considered to be

one and the same in spite of Paulding's public denial. Whether Davy had crossed Paulding's mind—note that Hackett did not deny it—there is no doubt that Wildfire was Davy, fact and fiction. The record has it that Crockett attended a performance of the play and actually stood up and took a bow.<sup>2</sup> Crockett, mind you, not Hackett! The line between the man in public life and the nineteenth-century actor was not clearly discernible, and as far as the public was concerned the actor frequently took second place in the continuing competition between the platform and the stage.



In the spring of 1830 James Hackett was enjoying pleasurable success as the comedy star of the Park Theatre. Since his first appearance in 1826,<sup>3</sup> he had tried with varying success both comic and serious roles, leaning more and more towards eccentric comedy. He tried all types in a search for original pieces he could call his own. To win a place in the highly competitive world of comedy in those days not only required an individual style as it does today, but also a line of hit character parts with which the public, an actor's sole press agent, could identify him. Once Hackett began to find audience favor, he struck out on his own and soon acquired a reputation as the champion of native American comedy. By 1830 he had achieved success with several type-characters, but notably the down-East Yankee and Rip Van Winkle. Dutchman Hackett was readily identified everywhere with Irving's Catskill Dutchman. Still he had to maintain his position by finding fresh material.

It was at this point that the actor announced a play contest. Such a contest was the typical method of procuring plays in the 1830's when playwrights, who wrote for the stage as a living, did not exist in America as in England. The winner of the contest was awarded several hundred dollars in cash. The type of play desired was suggested by the sponsor. When he was an actor such as Hackett he might well prescribe the central character with the implication that the authors might keep his

<sup>2</sup> Botkin, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> For accounts of James Hackett's life on the stage see James Hackett, *Notes, Criticism, and Correspondence Upon Shakespeare's Plays and Actors* (New York 1863); John Durand, "Souvenirs of Hackett the Actor," *Galaxy* XIV (1872), ff.; and Montrose Moses, *Famous Actor-Families of America* (New York 1906).



special talents in mind. The winning play, if reasonably successful before an audience but still in need of adjustment, might be rewritten by the original author or other writers who were paid a hackwriter's commission. If such plays were carefully developed and jealously guarded to prevent pirating by other actors, they could be kept alive in a repertoire for the major part of a career and win fame and fortune for their actor-owners.

So it was with *Lion of the West*. Hackett offered three hundred dollars for "an original comedy whereof an American should be the leading character."<sup>4</sup> By October it was certain that he would find a play. The New York *Mirror* followed the contest with great interest, and on October 3, 1830 reported that "one of our most popular writers" with "acute powers of observation and . . . intimate knowledge of men and manners" was at work on a play. This thinly veiled puff referred, of course, to J. K. Paulding, a regular contributor to the *Mirror*. It came as no surprise, then, when the December 4 issue announced Paulding as the winner. In giving the result, the *Mirror* pointed out that Paulding had not been motivated in writing his play by the offer of prize money but only by his "noble ambition to second the efforts of our indigenous comedian in laying the foundation of a national drama." This conclusion was sound. In view of the discouraging attitude toward the theatre shown by many people of the upper classes, including some with literary talents, it is likely that Paulding would not have participated at all had he not had faith in the development of a native stage that would free America from the confining yoke of English actors and playwrights. It is to the *Mirror's* credit that it assumed a strong leadership in the attempt to "find" America on the stage.

No sooner was Paulding announced as winner than he found himself involved in controversy. The *Mirror* reported that Paulding's hero was "a Congress-man [*sic*] from the west," but other papers were less covert. They said that Davy Crockett was the hero. The *Mirror* denied this. At Paulding's request, its editors wrote:

The design was to embody certain peculiar characteristics of the west in one single person, who should thus represent not an individual but the species.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> W. I. Paulding, *The Literary Life of James K. Paulding*, p. 218.

<sup>5</sup> *Mirror*, December 18, 1830.

So fearful was Paulding that his intentions both as gentleman and artist would be questioned that he quickly wrote Congressman Crockett in Washington, disclaiming any reference in *Lion* to the gentleman's "peculiarities." In his gracious if somewhat illiterate reply, Crockett told Paulding that he thought him "incapable of wounding the feelings of a stranger and unlettered man who had never injured" him.<sup>6</sup> But once the tie to Crockett had been made and bruited abroad, no amount of letter writing and protest in the press could put it down. The public was all too ready to believe anything about the colorful Tennessean. Still, on April 23, two days before *Lion* was to open at the Park, the *Mirror* was trying to quell the widespread rumor:

It is obvious that a character having any pretensions to be drawn from life must resemble somebody. . . . Originals will be found in society approximating to it in many respects, yet differing in others . . . and nothing but a general resemblance to a certain class of men, whose peculiarities have, no doubt, been exaggerated, was aimed at.

It is quite possible that Paulding's subsequent refusal to revise his play upon Hackett's request was partly caused by the Crockett controversy.

✓   ✓   ✓

Hackett presented *Lion of the West, or, A Trip to Washington* for his benefit on April 25, 1831. The *Mirror* was singularly modest in its review on the Saturday morning following. Apparently the evening had not gone well: the play was miscast in several instances, so the reviewer thought, and care had not been taken in getting up some of the scenes. Only Hackett won the broad compliment of having kept the "house in a roar." And when the play was repeated a week later, the *Mirror* gave it merely the one-line notice that it had played to a full house. In view of this journal's former interest in the comedy, this obvious underplaying clearly shows a keen disappointment in the actual production.

The review made no mention of the writing, undoubtedly out of deference to Paulding who had deliberately played *Lion* down, passing it off as a minor piece "written with a desire to

<sup>6</sup> Paulding *op. cit.*, p. 219.

introduce Mr. Hackett . . . in a new character, and to aid in producing a taste for dramatic performances, founded on domestic incidents and native manners."<sup>7</sup> In all truth it was probably no more than Hackett styled it—"a vivid initial sketch."<sup>8</sup> Paulding maintained that it could not "aspire to the rank of a regular comedy."<sup>9</sup>

Much as we would like to know what Paulding did put down, the cast in the playbill of the Park Theatre on *Lion's* opening night is our best clue to its contents: Governor Bramble, Cecilia Bramble, and "Ladies, etc." probably represented "polite Washington society"; Roebuch, Higgins, and Count de Crillon were very likely English and French visitors to the capital; Max and Pullet could have been backstair servants; Alcibiades was probably a Negro waiter; and Snag was a possible henchman of Nimrod Wildfire. Introduce a comic backwoodsman into this group and the usual recipe for a comedy piece in the 1830's is complete. Even if the body of the piece was generally weak, the leading character certainly was not. Wildfire was drawn with the same artistic fancy Paulding had poured into his other work—a blend of the real and the picturesque—with a storyteller's grasp of human nature which gives sharp point to satire.

Although the initial reception of *Lion* indicated that there would be difficulties in making a success of it, Hackett was not daunted. When Paulding refused to rewrite the play, Hackett turned to John Augustus Stone, with Paulding's full approbation, and by early September the second version was ready for production.

Unlike Paulding, Stone was not a literary "name." In theatre circles, where he had made a modest reputation, he was generally regarded as a competent craftsman with a practical knowledge of the stage. He had written a few plays of which his most recent, *The Demoniack, or, The Prophet's Bride*, had met with mild acclaim at the Bowery Theatre two weeks before Hackett presented *Lion*; he had acted with varying success in some of the principal theatres in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston; and he had been raised to some prominence by the Forrest award

<sup>7</sup> *Mirror*, April 23, 1831.

<sup>8</sup> Paulding, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>9</sup> *Mirror*, April 23, 1831.

to *Metamora* which had had its première at the Park Theatre on December 15, 1829.

Whether Stone wrote a new play or only revised Paulding's is an open question. In view of the structure and content of the Stone version it is entirely possible—and this is pure conjecture—that he had written a large part of it for the original prize contest. Surely Hackett received more than one play and since his purpose was to find actable plays he certainly would not have discarded them. When the new version opened at Boston's Tremont Theatre on September 23, 1831, what the audience saw was an entirely new play. It was called *Lion of the West, or—Hurrah for Kentuck*—and except for the title and Colonel Nimrod Wildfire, who was left as his creator made him, the plot and characters were completely changed. Here is the cast:

Major Lexington, an officer of the British Army

Trueman Casual, a young gentleman

Peter Bonnybrown, a plain, warm-hearted, New England bachelor

Nimrod Wildfire, Bonnybrown's nephew

Lord Luminary, a suitor of Fredonia

Satellite, another adventurer

Deacon Dogwood, an innkeeper and former vendor of Yankee wares

Coquinard, a Canadian barber-surgeon who pretends to be M. Le Comte Rousillon

Groundling, Coquinard's associate

Scum

Miss Albina Towertop

Fredonia

Miss Patty Snags<sup>10</sup>

What Hackett had apparently wanted was a tightly woven plot piece, and Stone had provided just that: a conventional and rather worn romantic comedy about an orphan girl who is victimized by a titled English adventurer and rescued by a virtuous young man who has lost his fortune. The Englishman seeks revenge by attempting to ruin the hero's reputation, but is caught in his own chicanery. The orphan's long-lost father appears, the hero's fortune is recovered, and, with the father's blessing, the two lovers are united.<sup>11</sup> Colonel Wildfire "stands out in bold relief" throughout the play, and at the end he brings on his

<sup>10</sup> In Playbill, Park Theatre, November 24, 1831, additional characters were: O'Vowell, O'Damn, Tiptoe, Don Miguel, 1st Constable, 2nd Constable, and Hackney Coachman.

<sup>11</sup> For an extensive recounting of the plot see: New York *Mirror*, October 1, 1831.

intended, Miss Patty Snags of Salt Licks, who had "shot a bear at nine year's old" and could "lick her weight in wildcats."<sup>12</sup>

Hackett repeated the new version on September 26 and "drew together a very crowded house—indeed the greatest of the Boston season."<sup>13</sup> He played it for a third time on September 29. With this good Boston reception behind him, Hackett took the play on to Philadelphia where he showed it five nights at the Chestnut Street Theatre before rehearsing it with the Park Theatre Company for its New York opening on November 14, 1831. Upon its homecoming the *Mirror* was unqualified in its praise:

Mr. Hackett has made a fine hit. . . . Most of the jokes introduced in it are really ludicrous, and the audience seemed heartily pleased.

But again the old point was made that Wildfire was not Crockett, and that the play presented a:

. . . rather exaggerated likeness of a certain class who do exist, and are not out of the legitimate range of dramatic-probability.<sup>14</sup>

Whatever Hackett thought of the Crockett matter he kept to himself while in New York, but the "road" was a different matter. When he played Charleston, the *City Gazette* of February 6, 1832 briefly noted that "Wildfire is supposed to be drawn from Col. Davy Crockett, of Tennessee, a gentleman of Congress, remarkable in more respects than one." Had Hackett a hand in this? The businessman in him—he had been a general goods merchant in Utica and New York before going on the stage—would have been hard to suppress. If anything, Hackett was an opportunist, according to Joe Cowell who labeled him "a dramatic merchant."<sup>15</sup>

Assured of success, Hackett put *Lion* in his regular repertoire and showed it to the country in the spring of 1832. In Charleston he gave two extra performances for the "hundreds who were unable to gain admission"<sup>16</sup> on its regularly scheduled evening, and the *Mirror* of March 17, 1832, in far away New

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Boston *Courier*, September 29, 1831.

<sup>14</sup> *Mirror*, November 26, 1831.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Cowell, *Thirty Years Passed Among the Players in England and America*, p. 98.

<sup>16</sup> Charleston *Courier*, February 10, 1832.

York, noted this success. In March he played New Orleans where he encountered a like reception marked by the "most extravagant manifestations of popular appreciation."<sup>17</sup> Later he went on to Louisville and Washington, D. C. where Crockett may have seen it, and then back to Philadelphia and New York. A British Army officer saw *Lion* in Philadelphia and reported that the play delighted the audience, though he thought "much of the dialogue was in an unintelligible idiom." He also noted that the play "had so incensed some Westerners that they made threats against Mr. Hackett."<sup>18</sup> This was undoubtedly publicity "talk" and the *Mirror* classified it as rumor, observing that the Kentuckians had not "looked down 'slantendicular' at the humorous points in this character." And the writer went on to praise Hackett's "exaggerated likeness, not precisely of a species, but of individuals to be met not infrequently."<sup>19</sup>

Such unremitting praise from a critical journal of the arts for a native actor in a truly American play was not ignored by the Park Theatre. Hackett was engaged to play *Lion* there on the big American day of the year—the Fourth of July—and the performance brought in \$672 to close his most successful season to date. He increased this figure by \$150 when he opened the Park season with the play in September, and raised it by \$300 when he offered *Lion* for his farewell benefit on the eve of his departure for Europe in October 1832.

It was while Hackett was in London that the third version of the play was put together, the version he played for the rest of Wildfire's stage life. Bayle Bernard was Hackett's new writer. Before embarking in New York Hackett had spoken with John Howard Payne about a possible writer and Payne had recommended Bernard. Usually it would seem illogical to consider an Englishman for work on native American material, but Bernard was especially qualified. He stood out as a "play-wright" of "great industry and unquestionable talent."<sup>20</sup> And beyond this he knew something of Stateside life. Although he had passed most of his life in England, he had been born of English-actor

<sup>17</sup> John S. Kendall, *The Golden Age of the New Orleans Theatre*, p. 58.

<sup>18</sup> I. E. T. Coke, *A Subaltern's Furlough*, I, 35. Quoted in Amos L. Herold, *James Kirke Paulding, Versatile American*, p. 99.

<sup>19</sup> *Mirror*, June 16, 1832.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from John Howard Payne, *Mirror*, February 22, 1834.

parents in America. To be sure his knowledge of the United States was secondhand, primarily from editing his father's autobiographical account of his years as a theatre manager in Albany and Boston. *Retrospections of America*, as this account was entitled when published many years after the death of both father and son,<sup>21</sup> was replete with highly entertaining and colorfully detailed recountings of characters and manners in American life. How much the son drew on his father's accounts for his version of *Lion* we cannot know, but one suspects that they had an important hand in it as well as in his work on other Hackett pieces and in the writing he did later for George H. Hill and Joshua Silsbee, both famous impersonators of the Yankee character.

Bernard's version of *Lion* was registered on March 2, 1833 by the Lord Chamberlain, and *The Kentuckian*, as now it was to be called, had its première at Covent Garden one week later. No one quite anticipated the success Hackett was to enjoy in his American characters, especially in Wildfire, for until this performance he had not been well received by the London press. To have the "screamer" in person was quite another matter. London really liked the novelty. The play was performed again on March 11, and was such a success that it was added to the bill on March 12, 14, 16, and 18. In April Hackett was engaged by the Haymarket Theatre where he played the Colonel many times over a period of six weeks. At the end of May he showed him to Dublin audiences and before returning home he presented him to Liverpool. For the first time an American actor had been received without snobbishness and a coldly critical comparison with British stage luminaries. This was a significant victory not only for Hackett but for *The Kentuckian* as well.

What Bernard did to the play is once again visible only through cast description and an all too vague mention of the new characters and situations in reviews. *The Athenaeum* critic reported on March 16, 1833 that Bernard was responsible for "nothing" beyond cutting it down from three to two acts. This would indicate a mere shortening of the piece, which may have prompted the *Globe* of March 11, 1833 to label it "a characteris-

<sup>21</sup> John Bernard, *Retrospections of America, 1797-1811* eds., Laurence Hutton and Brander Matthews (New York 1887).

tic sketch (we do not know what otherwise to term it)." In Charleston Hackett had tried playing *Lion* in three rather than four acts, so apparently he was intent on reducing the plot to give Wildfire more stage time. He may also have reasoned that the comedy could be more easily programmed, cast, and staged if it were shorter and more compact.

Bernard, however, did a great deal more than just change the play's form. Cast comparisons imply such an extensive alteration in plot and character that again, with the exception of Wildfire, *The Kentuckian* looked like a totally different play. It now bore a much greater resemblance to an earlier Hackett piece done in December 1829 which was called *The Times, or, Life in New York*. Its complete title—*The Kentuckian—Life in New York in 1815*—bears this out and the joining of the two pieces is revealed by cast similarities:

Playbill, Covent Garden	Playbill, Tremont Theatre
March 9, 1833	March 19, 1830
<i>The Kentuckian</i>	<i>The Times</i>
Col. Nimrod Wildfire, a Raw Kentuckian	Industrious Doolittle, a Scheming Yankee
Freeman, a New York Merchant	Mr. Traffic, a Wealthy New York Merchant
Percival, an English Merchant and Gentleman	Percival, an English Merchant
Mrs. Luminary, a tourist and Speculator	Sir Croesus Mushroom, an English traveller
Caesar, a Free Black Waiter	Mr. Pompey, a Dandy Negro Waiter
Caroline, Mrs. Luminary's daughter	Caroline, a rich Heiress
Mrs. Freeman, the Merchant's wife	Mrs. Traffic, the Merchant's wife
Servant	Mons. Ragout, Valet de Chambre
Tradesman	Charles Barton
Countryman	Sly Hazard
Mary, maid to Mrs. Luminary	Amelia, Traffic's Daughter
Waiting Woman	Mrs. Jenkins

It would appear from this that Hackett and Bernard made a new play, retaining Wildfire of course, but adapting what was good in the previous versions of *Lion* and joining it to Hackett's original characters in *The Times*. Even Miss Patty Snags has



departed along with the sentimental drama of Fredonia and Trueman Casual in favor of a satirical farce which gives the Colonel the center of the stage throughout. Paulding had written a group of sketches; Stone had devised a well-knit plot; and now Bernard created a situation farce.

The most original character in the third version, Wildfire excepted, is Mrs. Luminary. Londoners were quick to identify her with Frances Trollope, the gifted Englishwoman who had been entertaining readers in England, but less so in America, with her *Domestic Manners of the Americans*,<sup>22</sup> a lively account of her recent visit to the States, published in 1832. She had been so blatantly outspoken about her American hosts and had given such offence that she was fair game for any American satirist, and Hackett had his fun. Once away from England he was bold enough to bill the character as Mrs. Wollope in New York and then in Boston, dropping all pretense, she was advertised as Mrs. Trollope. Hackett's use of the author was timely, to be sure, but she merely represented one of the many who were doing similar critical studies of American manners during this period. Hackett's description of Sir Croesus Mushroom in the cast of characters for *The Times* is Mrs. Luminary, Wollope, or Trollope in the making:

... an English traveller, making the tour of America, with the intention of publishing a book; a great despiser of everything republican as too vulgar for his taste.

London critics found *The Kentuckian* "most laughable and excellent" and the jokes droll and pointed. They set down Wildfire as "the Gascon of the United States," a "genuine portrait" and "a pleasing one."<sup>23</sup> *The Times* of London thought he could be compared to an:

... open-hearted, childish, giant whom anyone might deceive but none could daunt. His whimsical extravagance of speech arises from a mere exuberance of animal spirits; and his ignorance of the conventional restraints of society he overbalances by a heart that would scorn to do a mean or dishonest action.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (New York 1949).

<sup>23</sup>*The Literary Gazette*, April 27, 1833; *Globe*, March 11, 1833; *Athenaeum*, March 16, 1833.

<sup>24</sup>Paulding, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

And they laughed over Wildfire's droll talk, delivered by Hackett "with the emphasis regularly imposed in the wrong places." The *Literary Gazette* of March 16, 1833 printed some of Wildfire's quips:

I have had a speech in soak these six months.

Pistols! Pistols are trumpery: they lodge a ball in a man's body, and wound his feelings! a rifle, now, sends it clean through and no mistake.

You are like a new pen, and I'll use you up to the stump.

Stranger, if you think to turn me, you may as well row up the Falls of Niagara in a fish-kettle, with a crow-bar for an oar.

I can outgrin a wildcat. I was in a menagerie once: stranger, says I, talk to your wild cats grinning; look here, says I, and I gave one of 'em a look, and he turned on his back and died.

My father can whip any man in Kentuck, and I—I can whip my father.

Stranger, if you keep your mouth so wide open, I guess you'll sunburn your teeth.

If you plant a crow-bar overnight in Kentuck it will sprout tenpenny nails the next morning.

Give us some music 300 horsepower.

Stick me in a split log for a wedge.

If the English were not seeing the best of America on the stage, they were most assuredly seeing part of its honest, good-natured self. During a period still fraught with tensions and rivalries, Colonel Nimrod Wildfire, Yankee Jonathan's near cousin, and thus another nephew of John Bull, won many valuable friends for America. Hackett, the American comedian extraordinary, was our first theatrical ambassador of good will.

James Hackett's return to these shores was a minor triumph. The stamp of London success was upon him and he could have starring engagements almost for the asking. At the Park Theatre in New York he brought an average nightly receipt of \$640 in September, and the \$1,035 received for his benefit with *The Kentuckian* definitely placed him in the top drawer of all theatre performers, including visiting English stars. In other cities he found the same enthusiasm for *The Kentuckian*. The wild independence of this homebred Westerner was in the air, for he was an expression of Jacksonian democracy. He was America, America dressed up in buckskin clothes, deerskin shoes, and coonskin hat, to be sure, but truly American; and in him the new raw-boned, hard-working men of the lower classes, who

were beginning to come to the theatre, saw something of themselves, and they stayed to laugh and admire. Only when time and circumstances began to change the face of America did *Lion* disappear from the boards.

While the literary qualities of this old comedy, were it available for study in its several versions, would undoubtedly be in question, none can deny its power, caricature as it probably was, to arouse imagination in the minds of an audience. Literary merit was far from its intention, for it was meant to be acted in the robust *Commedia dell'Arte* spirit, and it lived fully in the playing. "That which pleases long, and pleases many, must possess some merit," wrote Samuel Johnson. Colonel Nimrod Wildfire passed the test. Davy Crockett was the pattern; Paulding, Stone, and Bernard filled in the scene; and Hackett gave him immortal life.

## FIVE STAGE DESIGNERS OF WEST GERMANY

by

HANS ROTHE

By 1944 the majority of the two hundred and fifty odd theatre buildings in Germany had been obliterated or stood as skeletons wherein German plays, operas, and ballets, had been performed for more than one hundred and fifty years. Had the Nazi regime kept its hold this loss would have been of little consequence for by state decree the theatre companies had already been dissolved and theatre artists had fled or been swallowed up by the stark "war effort." But the regime *was* crushed in 1945 and the long-frustrated theatre worker was quick to emerge. He searched for platforms on which productions could be mounted, finding them in school auditoriums, suburban cinema houses, dance halls, and, in Darmstadt, even in an orangery. The stage once located, the scene designer was catapulted into a position of the utmost importance. There were no tools or equipment, and scenery and costumes were in ashes. There was a real state of emergency and the stage designer willingly accepted the challenge.

The artistic problem can well be imagined. Stage production had to return to the *primitiv*, the elementary. To get his bearings, the designer almost automatically looked backward. He asked, "Where were we forced to stop?" He became aware of the great tradition of pre-Nazi days and the work of its exponents, such as Oscar Strnad, Traugott Mueller, and Ernst Stern, to name only a few of those high calibre artists. Just as automatically, he looked forward. He suddenly realized the need of a thorough housecleaning, and his makeshift stage presented him with the opportunity. Physical necessity was turned into an aesthetic ideal. A new conception—the "empty stage"—came into being, and Max Fritzsche and Franz Mertz became its most eminent representatives. We shall speak of these two men

later, along with the description of the work of three other outstanding designers: Paul Haferung, Willi Schmidt, and Rudolf Schulz.

The post-War designers struggled with inadequate materials for five or six years. Then, with the economic resurgence of West Germany, the inauguration of new playhouses, and the sudden abundance of materials of all kinds, their period of self-denial ended. The German theatre had caught its breath and once again could pick up the thread of the long history which had preceded it.

That the ordeal had been productive of great creativeness was attested by a remark in a letter I recently received from a German theatre worker:

It is an upsetting fact (*eine erschütternde Tatsache*) that by moving into a new building nearly all West German theatres lost their courage as well as their ability of enjoying genuine theatre work. Praised be the times when we were fighting for our existence while playing on the tables of taverns, in places impossible to heat, and balancing a protecting umbrella! Now they erect superdimensional, superchic, new buildings and physical existence is guaranteed for the theatre until the end of our lives. How depressing! How against the nature of all art! Already we know how much closer we were to the true spirit of the theatre in those days than we are today. The desire for experimentation has nearly gone!

The truth and accuracy of this judgment only the future can tell.

In 1953 there were 163 theatres operating in West Germany. We have to limit ourselves to this zone, for it is next to impossible to get a realistic picture of what is happening in the theatre field in East Germany. We do know, however, that the east had had to face the same problems as the west at the War's end, and we can gather from Bertolt Brecht's informative book, *Theaterarbeit*, published in Dresden in 1952, that the continued economic strain in the east is prolonging the period of bold experiment.

Since the end of the Eighteenth Century, when theatre began to be considered a desirable and necessary institution in Germany, stage design, with its concomitant, costume design, has been accepted as an independent art there. It is a profession of which its practitioners are proud. The designer is on the theatre staff and is a member of an organized guild. Women have joined the

guild, and some, like Leni Bauer-Ecsi of the Stuttgart State Theatre and Ita Maximowna, who works both in Berlin and Hamburg, are doing outstanding work. This is all to the good, for the present-day German theatre can employ twice as many designers as are now creating there.

The forenamed five scenic artists—Franz Mertz, Max Fritzsche, Paul Haferung, Rudolf Schulz, and Willi Schmidt—were asked seven questions. Below are composite answers to all but one of them, followed by a thumbnail sketch of each artist, in the order of his seniority, and a presentation of some of his designs.

\* \* \*

1. *Can you generally carry out your ideas without compromise?*

All five designers answered this question in the affirmative. This would lead to the belief that the age-old struggle between director or management and the designer no longer exists; that the director does not insist on changes good for the play but not for the set; that the management does not object to the high cost entailed in the realization of a design.

2. *Do you think that post-War German stage designs are comparable to those created during the "golden age," that is, between 1919 and 1932?*

Here opinion was divided but not on a "Yea" or "Nay" basis. Most believe that the standards have been reached; the others say that "no comparison is possible."

3. *What in your opinion is the best climate for the practice of your art?*

No difference of opinion here. The answer came "teamwork" and several of the designers used the English term to express their meaning. They believe that the set should serve the play, not dazzle by itself.

4. *Do you reap satisfaction from your work or would you prefer being an artist "in your own right," independent of a specific source of inspiration?*

Unequivocally they all said that they love their métier. They believe the stage to be their most perfect means of self-expression.

5. *Regardless of period or nationality, which stage designer have you admired most?*

The answers to this question will be found in the sketch of each artist.

6. *What is your critical judgment of your American colleagues?*

Most of the designers have never visited these shores, therefore their knowledge of our stage is so scant that they would prefer not to venture an opinion.

7. *Is there a chance of your getting production for a play because of its tempting set possibilities irrespective of the value of the play itself?*

This final question puzzled the artists, for in Germany the designer is inspired only by the play his theatre plans to mount. He never reads a play with an eye to a set until he is faced with a definite problem. In other words, his creativeness is aroused by the challenge of an accepted play, not by his artistic yearnings.

\* \* \*

FRANZ MERTZ (b. Cologne, 1897) studied art at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art with the intention of becoming a freelance artist. By a fortunate twist of fate, he joined the Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus directed by Louise Dumont and Gustav Lindemann. There he discovered that his art was most impressively revealed to him through the medium of the theatre. Never since has he made a serious attempt to break away. Although he recognized the importance to the stage designer of the Bauhaus style, he says that Alexander Tairov's Kamerny Theatre, when touring Germany in 1924-1925, came as an "eye-opener" to him. There is no doubt that this troupe did have a great and revolutionary influence on the German stage, perhaps the greatest following World War I.

In 1930, at the Berlin State Theatre, Mertz constructed the first suspended scenery set for the production of *Close the Door, There is a Draft* (*Mach die Tür zu, es zieht*) by Oscar Kokoschka, the painter. He became enamored of the possibilities of suspended scenery and proceeded to adapt the principle of mobiles

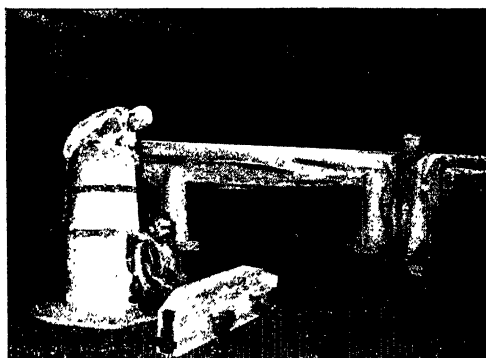
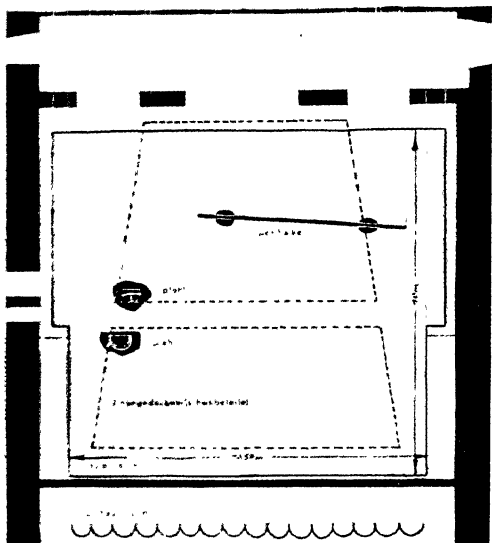
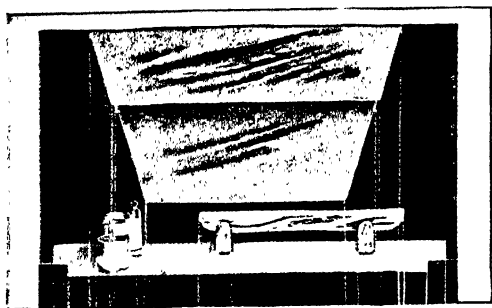


Plate 1. Franz Mertz: *King Lear*, State Theatre, Darmstadt, 1951.  
(Director: H. G. Sellner)

Above: Floor plan showing two suspended ceilings and one beam.  
Below: Photograph of set with Lear, Kent, and Fool.



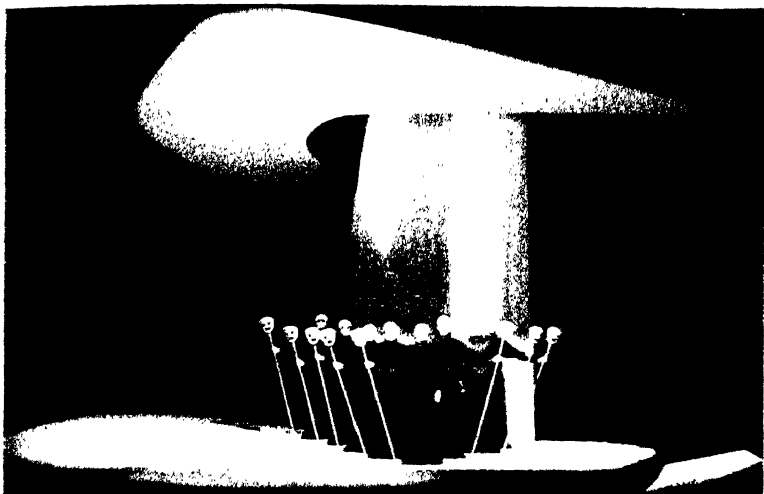


Plate 2. Franz Mertz: *Oedipus Rex*. State Theatre. Darmstadt, 1953.  
(Director: H. G. Sellner)  
The set with the Chorus onstage.

to scenic needs. He has profound admiration for the mobiles of Alexander Calder whom he calls "a terrific person."

The others whose work has impressed Mertz are: Walter Gröpius, Wassilij Kandinsky, Max Ernst, Henry Moore, Mies van der Rohe, and—"most important"—Frank Lloyd Wright. His admiration for great architects should be noted, for today, throughout the world, stage design shows a tendency toward abandoning the pictorial for the structural element.

Mertz is happy to work "for the cause." As an avocation he invents all sorts of mechanisms. Just recently he perfected an apparatus which makes lighter work of potato peeling. The invention of such mechanical devices invariably leads him to new ideas which, sooner or later, will be incorporated in his stage designs. He insists that "a designer who is nothing more than a painter should be banned from the theatre." Yet, he is not doctrinaire. On seeing the American production of *Oklahoma!* at the Berlin Festival in 1951, Mertz was happy to discover that his principles had not done him "too much harm." He found himself thoroughly enjoying the pictorial style of the settings.

At present Mertz is with the Darmstadt State Theatre, thought by many to be the most important and most advanced theatre of the day. He met its director, H. G. Sellner, when they both were working at the Kiel Municipal Theatre, another center in the vanguard of theatrical art. Sellner, the most powerful director of his generation, was the perfect man to recognize Mertz's talent. By his taking over the Darmstadt Theatre in 1951 and engaging Mertz, each man has been able to develop to the height of his power. They are ideal collaborators: sometimes Sellner imposes his ideas on the Mertz stage architecture; at others the Mertz design influences the course of Sellner's direction. The "teamwork" of these two gifted men has created what is known as the "New Darmstadt Style."

MAX FRITZSCHE (b. Karlsruhe, 1906), as a boy, thought he would like to become a stage designer. At sixteen he was an apprentice at the "factory" of a conventional stage designer in Hamburg. There he learned to mix colors, nail canvas to wooden frames, and run errands for his master. Later he studied at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art. When offered a job as assistant at the Muenster Municipal Theatre, he jumped at the chance. This was an intelligent move, for in Germany the designer, like the actor, has to begin in some small provincial theatre and slowly work his way up to one of the leading playhouses.

Fritzsche is now the number one man at the Kiel Municipal Theatre for whose recent reconstruction he was mainly responsible. He has many things in common with Mertz, primarily a sincere simplicity in his work. Unlike Mertz, however, he has not abandoned pictorial effects completely, but when he does employ them he practices great economy. Often his sets make one feel that he wishes to impress more by what he leaves out than by what he puts in. He is the creator of the stratagem of stressing an artistic element by its very absence. On the other hand, wherever he places an accent it is sure to stir the audience's imagination.

Fritzsche is one of the few designers who work for theatres other than his own. But he gives most of his time to the Kiel Theatre working with Alfred Noller, the director, whose fame

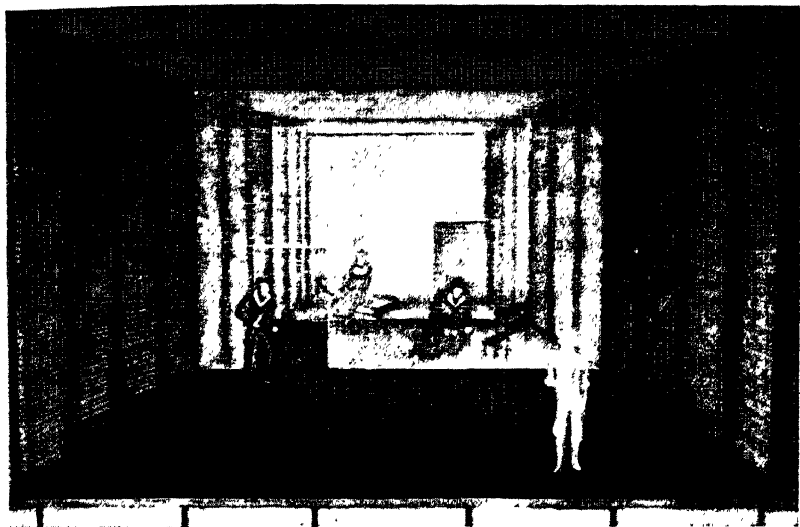


Plate 3. Max Fritzsche: *Hamlet*, Municipal Theatre. Bochum, 1952.  
 (Director: H. Schalla)  
 Original design for the set.

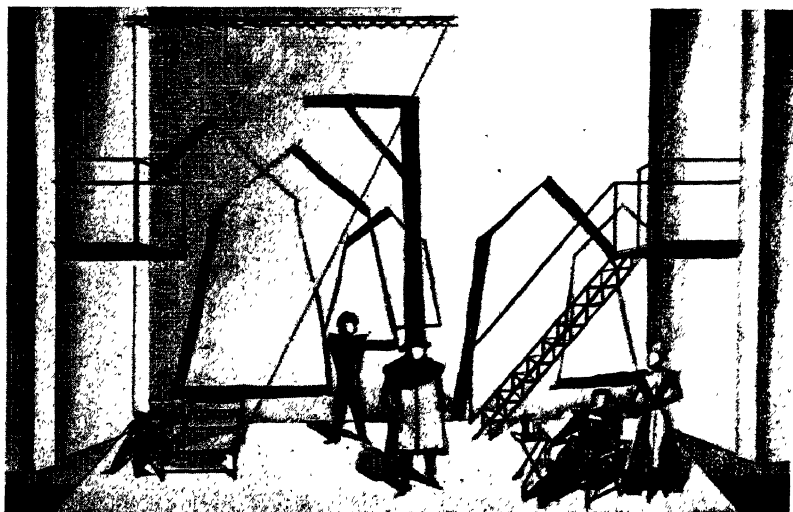


Plate 4. Max Fritzsche: *Le diable et le bon Dieu* (Jean-Paul Sartre),  
 Municipal Theatre. Kiel, 1952.  
 (Director: Alfred Noller)  
 Original design for the set.

was well established by 1933. In his productions Noller permits a broader scope of expression than would be considered acceptable to the uncompromising theatre at Darmstadt.

Fritzsche, being nine years Mertz's junior, has found orientation more difficult. Often he is afraid that he appears "like someone who has not yet made up his mind," and he is constantly checking his principles. He does his utmost to keep the paths open which lead to various dramatists, yet he is exceedingly wary. He is quoted as saying, "There are stage designers who plant their dramatists along the same road, picking them up later by the dozens. Personally, I think, the road to Goethe will never lead to Shakespeare."

The seventh question did not puzzle Fritzsche as much as it did the rest, for in picking out plays he is a great help to Noller. He says, "Whenever a certain play inspires me with a particularly original idea for a setting, I use a wooden hammer to knock on the heads of the management until they are finally convinced that the play (and I) must be given a chance."

Among former stage designers Fritzsche admires Traugott Mueller and Adolphe Appia the most.

PAUL HAFERUNG (b. Berlin, 1907) asserts that his affinity for artificial light is due to the fact that he was born at night. He inherited his manual skill from his father, a carpenter, who trained him at an early age. He received his schooling in Berlin, never losing sight of his ambition to become an artist. In the aftermath of World War I he was more than happy to accept a stage designer's apprenticeship at the German Opera House in Charlottenburg, but with the idea of only remaining four years. His plan was to explore the whole world of the theatre. His "exploration" at Charlottenburg was so successful that he had to remain eleven more years to assist all the great designers who came there to work. He acted as head of the model building workshop until 1933 when he was appointed chief stage designer. After a "guest performance" as a private who never left the barrack grounds, he helped in the reopening of the Charlottenburg Opera House in 1945 while working at various other theatres in Berlin. In 1947 the city of Essen requested his aid

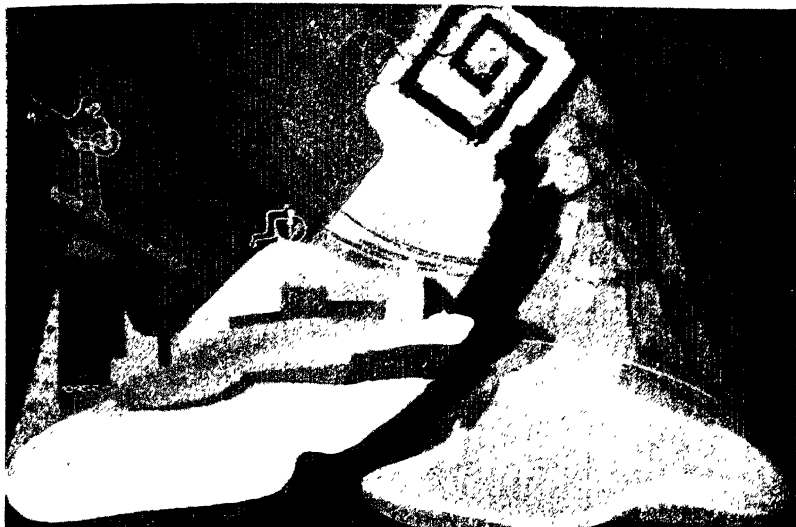


Plate 5. Paul Haferung: *Troilus and Cressida*. Municipal Theatre. Essen, 1952.

(Director: G. Sauer)

Original basic design for the set. Five variations of the theme were used during production. Stage right in ochre for the Greeks; stage left in grey-green for the Trojans; stage center in black, only for Thersites.

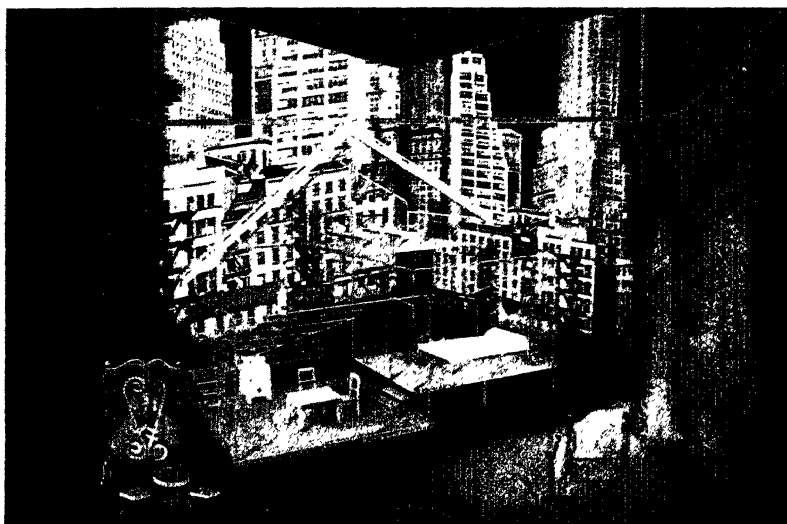


Plate 6. Paul Haferung, *Death of a Salesman* (Arthur Miller), Municipal Theatre. Essen, 1951.

(Director: G. Sauer)

Original design for the set. Color scheme: black, red, and white.

in the creation of a new style of opera which was to be produced in a suburban dance hall. The opera was such a success that praises of Haferung's work were sung throughout West Germany. Immediately many theatres began to ask for his co-operation. At present he is the head of the workshop at the newly constructed Bochum Municipal Theatre which opened with a production of *Richard III* in September 1953. Haferung, of course, designed the sets.

To date Haferung has not been able to prove his thesis that designing and directing should be done by the same person. He believes this to be particularly true in opera which he considers an ideal medium for the stage designer since its appeal, except for the music, is to the eye. He insists that opera should be directed in an unrealistic, even irrational, way. The soloists and chorus should simply be color spots moving across the stage, according to the music, not the plot "which is irrelevant anyway." One can feel that Haferung is well content to design for the stage. His youthful ambition to be an independent artist has disappeared. He is a great admirer of Traugott Mueller whose death during World War II was deeply felt by all theatre people in Germany.

Early in Haferung's career he provided the theatre management with models. This habit may have been decisive in the development of his style. All his designs have the clarity of a colored model and can be translated to the stage at a glance. He has been called a representative of the supernatural baroque; a high compliment, indeed, as the baroque is considered the most theatrical of all styles. He, like Mertz, uses suspended scenery but is given to gayer colors than his colleague. He particularly enjoyed designing the set for *Death of a Salesman* because upon reading the play a "double floor" was revealed to him which would lift the characters above themselves making transparent their psychological reactions. He is convinced that "this kind of a play makes the conventional theatre look ridiculous."

RUDOLF SCHULZ (b. Gnesen, 1909) studied at the Academy of Applied Arts in Berlin and by 1929 he had become an assistant in the workshop of Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater working under Ernst Schütte, Reinhardt's chief designer in those days. By

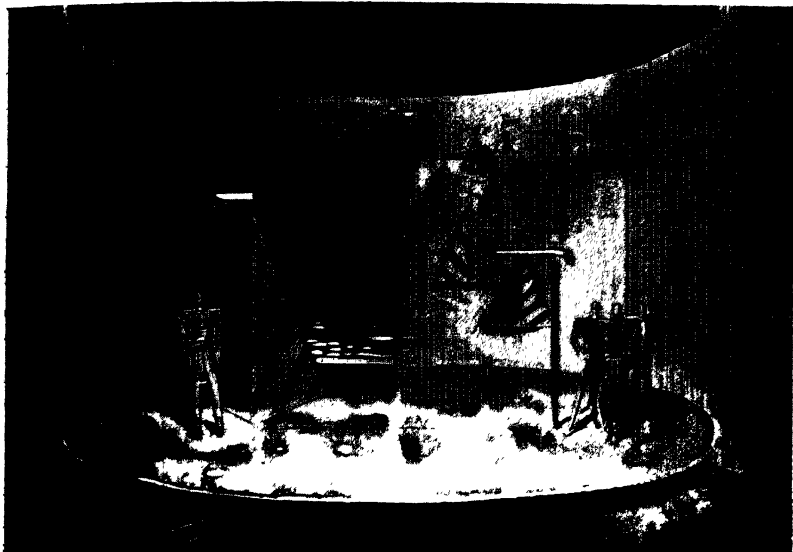


Plate 7. Rudolf Schulz: *Troilus and Cressida*, State Theatre.  
Hanover, 1952.

(Director: K. Streibing)  
Original design for the set.

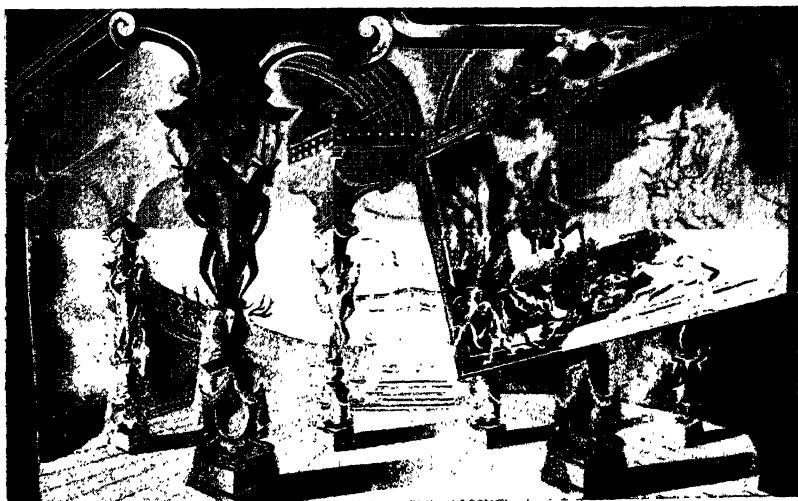


Plate 8. Rudolf Schulz: *Der Alpenkönig und der Menschenfeind*  
(Ferdinand Raimund), State Theatre. Hanover, 1949.

(Director: Alfred Noller)  
Original design for the set.

1938. though Reinhardt had gone, Schulz was a full-fledged designer there. In 1943 he became the head of the Hanover State Theatre Workshop, a position he still holds. He finds the set-up ideal, saying: "My job could not be better anywhere in the world." He has a magnificent workshop and large funds at his disposal. He has contributed decisively to the Hanover theatre's reputation, and, like many of his colleagues, he has become a kind of artistic conscience of the whole theatre. Designing for the stage is an ideal occupation for him. Although most of his work is done at the Hanover theatre he does make working trips to other art centers of West Germany.

Schulz is extremely versatile. He realizes that a free-lance artist can afford a severity of style but that a scene designer must have elasticity to fulfill the variety of his assignments. He does not want to be considered the exponent of a particular style for he believes that some plays demand an architectural frame while others need pictorial treatment. He is a balletomane and is greatly inspired by that field of theatrical art. The designers for whom he has great admiration point this up. They are: Traugott Mueller, Christian Bérard, Caspar Neher, and the Bibienas.

WILLI SCHMIDT (b. Dresden, 1919) studied philosophy, German, and history of art and theatre at the University of Berlin. He greatly admired Rochus Gliese, a famous designer of the "golden age," and therefore was delighted when Gliese accepted him as a free-lance assistant. With the advent of the Nazi regime Schmidt's academic work was halted and he found a berth in Berlin working as a stage designer, mostly at the State Theatre. Then came the barren years. Immediately after the War he helped reopen the Berlin Deutsches Theater. The experience of having to start from scratch made him realize that a stage designer "would always remain the fifth wheel of the wagon unless he could combine his designing with appropriate directing." Unlike his colleagues with a similar thought, he has made history by becoming a director.

At present he is designer-director of the Berlin Schiller Theatre. He is also teaching stage design at the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts. Between 1945 and 1952 he designed the sets for 37





Plate 9. Willi Schmidt: *Der Prozess* (Franz Kafka-André Gide),  
Schlossparktheater, Berlin, 1950.  
(Director: Willi Schmidt)  
The set in production.



Plate 10. Willi Schmidt: *Oedipus Rex*, Schillertheater, Berlin, 1951.  
(Director: Willi Schmidt)  
The set in production.

productions, 26 of which he directed. Yet he is not satisfied. He says that his ambition is to head a theatre in which he could train young people who are still untouched by experience or renown. He would form a sort of "order" and initiate these young people into crew, actors, director, and technicians dedicated to the theatre alone. The initiates would avoid the cinema, radio, and television so that they could devote themselves to the main task of imposing the severe laws of art upon the shapelessness of the mid-twentieth-century world. Schmidt calls this a pathetic dream, never to be realized.

The work of the other artists may appear more impressive, may look more modern, and may seem to have greater personality, but Schmidt's obvious restraint is part of his artistic creed. He is perhaps the most serious of all when he says that he would "never give a set so much importance that it could live by itself." He considers himself nothing more than an instrument required by the multiple facets of a theatre. His seriousness goes still further. He is conscious of being one of the heirs of a great period in German theatre history and feels a deep responsibility.

Despite post-War restrictions, Schmidt has succeeded in traveling to France, Italy, and even to the United States. He was here during the 1951-1952 season and claims that our theatre influenced him decisively. In general, he admired the sets of our musicals but was somewhat disappointed in the way the classics are staged. He found Jo Mielziner's work most impressive.

\* \* \*

In closing I would like to point up the international character the stage designers of West Germany have come to assume. Before 1933 the artists were able to design sets for an abundance of German plays which dealt with the problems of the day. Because of post-War conditions no such plays are being produced and the German stage is living on the classics and on plays written by foreign playwrights of significance. Therefore German stage design bears a rather ageless and international character. Add to this the fact that in the German theatre system a play assumes as many different faces as the number of theatres in which it is produced, and one can easily see the value to the world theatre of the work being done by the designers of West Germany.





32

THE

TREATISE

ON

THE

ARTS

AND

MANUFACTURES

OF



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THE THEATRE ANNUAL

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Courtesy of the New York Public Library

*Paphnutius, or, the Conversion of Thaïs.*

The tenth-century play by Hroswitha which served as Anatole France's inspiration for his novel, *Thaïs* (1890).  
Original illustration in Charles Magnin,

*Théâtre de Hrotsvitha* (Paris 1845).



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## THE RIGHT TO DISSENT: FEAR OR FREEDOM FOR THE AMERICAN DRAMATIST?

by

JOHN T. DUGAN

The cold war of nerves being hotly waged throughout the world today has brought forth such a loathsome litter of fearful neuroses that in the name of freedom there has been created in this country an anomalous atmosphere of suspicion and distrust wherein witches with red skirts are hunted down in every corner. characters are assassinated with carelessly hurled epithets, and works of art are slashed and hacked and banned completely from the light of day. Red, White, and Blue, the proud colors of honor and freedom, stand in danger of becoming identified with the Red Herring, the White Lie, and the Blue Pencil. With a good measure of purple language mixed into this spectrum of suspicion.

Amidst this hysteria, the theatre in the United States has seemingly played serenely on, insulated by its own asbestos curtain, heeding not and fearing less the rumbling echoes of great battles being fought outside its doors. Whereas her sister art forms—for example, films, novels, poems, painting, and sculpture—have all felt the busy axe of the would-be despot, the drama has apparently happily escaped unscathed the repressive measures of the professional patriot, the Philistine, and the Puritan. But has it?

The question naturally arises: "Has the theatre alone *really* escaped completely—and with such fantastic good fortune!—the necessity of dancing to the tune played by the pipers of panic?"

It is quite true that there has been no overt censorship of the drama comparable to the treatment accorded the films. *The Miracle*, *Pinky*, *M*, and *La Ronde*. Yet would it not be dangerously apathetic to conclude on this basis that drama has *not at all* been affected by the inhibiting forces in the contemporary environment? Would it not be more alert and reasonable to sus-

pect that under the tranquil façade the drama has been seriously restrained?

Might it not be asked, for instance, how many young men and women, possibly America's future playwrights of the first order, or for that matter, how many mature dramatists, are failing to write down what they have to say because of a fear of outraging the vengeful power behind a currently fashionable opinion and thus exposing themselves to the destructive social and economic consequences accorded other dissenters from the self-appointed prophet's party line? How many great dramas and dramatists have died aborning? How many great ideas have gone unsaid? How many great performances and productions have gone unseen? How many great moments of enlightenment have been lost to mankind because inquisition has taken the place of inquiry and fear walks abroad in the land of the free?

Of course, the full answer to these questions can never be known; by the very reason of the negative nature of the contended effects, there is no tangible evidence to cite in documentation. Yet the deplorable effects must surely be as real as the concrete shadows of fear that serve as their cause, and it must be profoundly disturbing to anyone who speculates on the extent of the sterilization so far inflicted on the art of the drama. It must disturb him to consider what the theatre will be like if fear prevails in the future and what it would be like if fear had prevailed in the past. If dramatists had in every age of tension crept on little cat feet and created only purring propaganda for special interests with supposed monopoly on truth and goodness, if they had always floated with the current popular view, it is extremely doubtful whether Thespis, in the first place, would have dared against all custom to introduce the startling innovation of impersonating an imaginary character.

Just give thought to what drama would be today without many of its greatest masterpieces. From Euripides and Aristophanes through Ibsen, Shaw, Synge, and Odets playwrights have employed their human and aesthetic right to protest and dissent: to their honor as men and artists, to the excitement and stimulation of other artists, and to the enrichment of civilization.

In the recent Thirties, for example, you may or may not have agreed with the themes, plots, or motives of the Group

Theatre,\* to name one of the many dynamic organizations charging the dramatic landscape with vitality and controversy in those years, but the impetus the Group Theatre gave modern theatre and culture is undeniable. You may deplore what they had to say, but you must defend their right—and more, their necessity—to have said it.

And yet ask yourself: Could the like of such a group spring from the sleek Theatre Guild of today? Would any young people now dare to produce an anti-capitalistic play such as Clifford Odets' *Waiting for Lefty*? Or even a pacifist drama as Irwin Shaw's *Bury the Dead*? Although it has always been the genius of American democracy to see that the rights of the minority are respected and upheld against the tidal tyranny of the majority, the answers should be disquietingly obvious.

At present critics and public alike inveigh against the dearth or barrenness of modern drama. At the same time they rigorously censure the moral, social, and political defections of artists; so that the playwright either hesitates to treat certain subjects or, doing so, he finds his loyalty and uprightness made publicly suspect.

In these tremulous times, therefore, it is of urgent importance for both the artist and the general citizenry to understand clearly the nature of the dramatist's right to speak freely and forcefully the insights that transfigure his mind and impel him to write. However, while writers in the past have courageously enunciated their independence, rarely if ever has the playwright or his adherent articulated the fundamental philosophical basis for the artist's legal and spiritual independence. This is what I should like to essay here.

The crux of the entire problem, the fundamental question which must be satisfactorily answered to give meaning to any and all conclusions, is: *What is drama*? Allowing that this may be a big question requiring a big answer, it can be sufficiently resolved in the limited space of these pages to serve our present purpose.

Drama is obviously, in the first place, a means of communication. If it is not, then all people in all places in all times have been guilty of egregious ignorance and self-deception. I think it

\* Group Theatre, New York, an organization evolved from the Theatre Guild, which became autonomous in 1931 and flourished until 1941. See Harold Clurman, *The Fervent Years* (New York 1950).

can be agreed that such continual, consistent error is unlikely. Certainly there would never be any thought of censorship if drama were unable to communicate.

As a means of communication, then, drama is, or should be, entitled to the same freedom of speech—and freedom from censorship—that the press enjoys under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. And it ought to be considered equally as tyrannical to suppress drama before public viewing as to suppress a newspaper before it reaches the stands.

Secondly, then, what does drama communicate? It is clear, I presume, that drama not only is a means of communication different from that of, say, the Associated Press, but that drama also communicates something different from the press services. Why? Generally speaking, the Associated Press reports the *status quo*. But drama, if it is to be art, interprets the *status quo* in order to communicate Beauty; the real, enduring—and not the apparent, ephemeral—meaning of the human action being imitated in dramatic creation.

It is both the courageous glory and the fundamental characteristic of drama that it has rarely accepted the *status quo* merely because it was generally accepted, even beloved, by the majority. The playwright is not a parasite, concerned with embellishing delectable delusions or pretty platitudes. The playwright is primarily concerned with Beauty.

But what ultimately produces the Beautiful for Man? The Beautiful is produced when truth and goodness—the proper objects of the respective faculties that uniquely characterize men as men: human intellect and will—are *immediately* known by those faculties.

The Beauty of drama is: it offers truth and goodness in relation to human action without the inevitable daily analysis of psyche and circumstance to discern motive and rationale in the conduct of self and others, without the usual laborious ratiocination and action demanded of Man to attain these; in the mere *contemplation* of the drama the intellect and will are allayed and satisfied by the truth and goodness transparently emanating from the form and the matter of the drama itself. The artist has, as it were, perspired for us. The consequent satiety thus produces a state of euphoria, if you will, in the person contemplating the



drama. The drama is then called *Beautiful*, or it is said to possess *Beauty*.

Perhaps it will help to clarify and describe the nature of drama and the nature of the Beauty of drama if we delineate how a hypothetically ideal playwright produces a Beautiful human action. Man's major problem is to introduce order into the seeming chaos of life's deeds and misdeeds, from the insignificant to the momentous, which threaten to engulf him in disorder and confusion and despair. The artist reassures him by revealing an underlying order, a Beautiful order, in the universe and that it *is* attainable. The playwright affirms and demonstrates this order in the area of human action and thus gives Man the hope and the courage to go on.

Through applied thought or inspiration (perhaps more accurately described as infra-rational intuition), the playwright obtains an insight which illuminates human action; that is, some incisive truth concerning the relation of Man to himself, to his fellowmen, or to his world. The playwright then embodies this insight in a concrete, particularized human action which, at the same time, shows what Man is and what he should be. His art as a dramatist is not to copy the real verbatim, but to idealize the real and realize the ideal.

Thus, drama eliminates ultimately what is transient and particular and reveals the permanent and essential features of the original insight of the playwright. It discovers the form towards which an action tends. In the very act of eliminating the accidental, a higher Beauty and perfection are discovered than were manifested in the world of reality.

Drama seeks the universal in the individual, the necessary beneath the contingent, the permanent beneath the changing. And in some respects it can do this better than Nature herself, for it can disregard the laws of space and time, ranging from place to place at will, or condensing decades into minutes. As Aristotle has said: "Poetry . . . is more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular."\* Unlike philosophy, however, as Butcher points out, drama employs the medium of sensuous and imagina-

\* Aristotle, *Poetics*, IX, 3.

tive form.\* In this sense, drama is a concrete philosophy. It is, moreover, a painless philosophy; rather one of delight.

The playwright's insight, then, comes in the form of a universal truth. And what precisely is that? It is some expression of the Natural Law whose primary precepts are universals concerning Man's action as human (moral) or inhuman (immoral). It is here that drama fits into the beautiful concatenation of the universe: for drama deals with these universals through the particular human action of the play. The playwright's task is to concretize his universal insight concerning human action into a particular, coherent, probable plot, with credible characters who speak appropriate dialogue, in such a way that he communicates with brilliant clarity to the audience the rightness, the truth and goodness—in other words, the *Beauty*—of the original insight that "inspired" him to write the play.

Thus, drama applies the universal insights of the artist in particular cases of human action as demonstration of the Natural Law in concrete action. By so doing, it interprets Man in relation to nature and to the universe. It also gives him renewed hope for ordering his own life by making manifest the beautiful and inevitable underlying order that is actually present in the universe—which is seen by God always, by the artist in his art, and by the audience through the artifact, and otherwise rarely, if at all. In this way drama gives men vivid, vibrant reaffirmations of the existence of universal truth and universal good for which their rational nature is insatiably striving.

Unfortunately, as we know all too well, the greatest truths become platitudes in time for the same reason a truism is trite: it is so true so often. Notwithstanding how much we may have a cerebral recognition of truths as such, it is pallid to hear them baldly expressed. Truths, such as "It is evil to kill unjustly," "You should honor your parents," "Excessive ambition, jealousy, or pride is bad," have lost their impact through repetition, so that they can be easily inundated by the passions; they are colorless, unattractive generalizations; they even sound *naïve* in our modern age of "sophistication."

But revivify them in a "medium of sensuous and imaginative

\* S. H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Arts* (4th ed.; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1923), p. 402.

form," clothe them in the particular, impassioned personalities of men and women in conflict—in a Hamlet, a Lear, a Macbeth, an Othello, or an Oedipus—and they are surcharged with immediacy, color, and impact. They are no longer naïve clichés but deep, probing, pertinent insights into Man in relation to his world and to his God—a "concrete philosophy," and an exemplification of Natural Law in action.

To cite only one example: *Othello* may be said to start with, exemplify, and end with the universal precept of the Natural Law that "All men who allow passion to dominate reason will be punished"—since this is contrary to the full and proper nature of Man *qua* Man. The play itself exemplifies that Othello did allow the passion of jealousy to dominate his reason and, therefore: Othello must be punished. Thus, from the individual we return to the universal: "Therefore, all men who allow passion to dominate reason must be punished."

But note, all this is not ratiocinative; it is not overtly preached. It is intuitively recognized by the audience through the ethical demonstration of character in action in *Othello*. This is the distinctive delight of drama. And this demonstration is the unique role of drama in the order of art and, ultimately, in the order of creation. The audience will have *experienced* the truth, the goodness, the Beauty of the universal precept really, meaningfully, totally—intellectually and emotionally. The playwright will have delighted his audience for he will have communicated his universal insight which is good and true and immediately manifest—*Beautiful*.

The distinctive nature of the truth and goodness experienced in the drama which evinces Beauty must be clearly understood. It is not the comfortable, convenient truth and goodness of a particular place or time or circumstance. It is a universal, timeless truth and goodness which describes and defines the actual, not the corrupted, nature of the universe, as envisioned by the Creator.

Art, therefore, is not a popularity contest. Nor is it essentially concerned, as Plato would hold, with the "praise of famous men," nor even with the eulogy of influential men, nor even with the sanctioning of transient customs and institutions. And this may largely explain the global unpopularity of much true art and

many true artists in these times of international crises and pressures, when partisan propaganda more than art is desired, urged, or demanded implicitly or explicitly.

The unique experience of Beauty in drama refines the faculties of the intellect and the will by purging them of the dross of despair and error, so that those who have had the experience are *re-created* in spirit, seeing there *is* reason in the apparent madness of the world. They are inspired to carry on in their own human actions, seeking in their own lives the joy in truth and goodness that the Beauty of great drama has given them.

To my mind this is the unique and proud end of drama. It is what dignifies, justifies, and necessitates the drama's important role in civilization. What other discipline, skill, or subject can aspire to affect the mind and the will in so *noble* a way? Certainly the sciences make no claim to refine the taste of our highest faculties with the experience of Beauty. And no other art can claim to be as meaningful for human beings as drama, which alone treats Man at his highest realization, with all his potencies actualized, with his full faculties *in action*.

This is what we must primarily understand. It is what all the artists of the theatre—and, above all, the playwrights—must recognize as the end to which all temporizing considerations must be subordinated. If we are to fulfill our privileges and responsibilities in a democratic society and in civilization, we must not permit drama to become a timid, squeaking shadow play, a mere means to the ends of petty, passing demagogues. We must not permit ourselves to become the stagewise stooges of the *status quo*.

We must not unquestioningly accept the unwarranted postulates of the officious or the sanctimonious, who are ever eager to preserve our minds pristine against all possible taint of corruption in a sterile, vacuumed strait-jacket of their own obliging design. We must be alert to examine the justice and the qualifications of those who sit in the back of the theatres and, striking their breasts, keen out: "Thank God I am holy and wise and patriotic, while other men are not!" Of such stuff are egomaniacal tyrants made in any nation—including America.

We must remember that we are not unredeemed and unre-

generate savages. We must remember today and always that we are free men, not slaves. We must dare to act accordingly.

Therefore, we must have the courage born of faith in the aesthetic, political, and moral rightness of our freedom to produce and enjoy drama which reflects truth and beauty as we see it, whether this vision is contrary to the transient mores of the times or not. The dramatist must dare to be an artist, a citizen, and a man.

*In gratitude to Mr. Tidwell and the Stanford University Press*

In the 1954 issue of the *Theatre Annual* Mr. Francis Hodge wrote of the three lost versions of James Kirke Paulding's *Lion of the West*. Our thanks now go to Mr. James N. Tidwell, who discovered the third version in the British Museum, and to the Stanford University Press for publishing it in December 1954.

—THE EDITORS

## HROSWITHA — TENTH-CENTURY MARGARET WEBSTER

by

Rosemary Sprague

From the far away past emerges a picture of a nun, with habit tucked up to her ankles and with manuscript in hand, striding up and down a great hall in a convent directing her sisters in a play she herself has written. This is Sister Hroswitha, the pride of the Benedictine Convent of Gandersheim, Saxony, who wrote, as far as can be ascertained, the very first plays in the Western world after the collapse of the Roman Empire. She is not the figment of some pseudo-historian's imagination. There is incontrovertible proof of her existence in the *History of Gandersheim* compiled by Henricus Bodo in 1025,<sup>1</sup> and in Munich there is a manuscript codex which proves that she not only wrote plays, six of them, but also wrote seven poems in leonine hexameters on the lives of assorted saints and an epic on the career of Emperor Otto the Great.

Because the religious life has always made great virtue of anonymity, it is almost impossible to document anything about Hroswitha with certainty. Calendar addicts, with their passion for statistics, have tried in vain to date her. She was born, they think, in A.D. 932 or 933—perhaps. She was probably professed in 959. To say which one of her literary efforts was created first would be no more than a guess for their standard of performance is uniform. It may be that the epic on Emperor Otto was completed in time for the coronation of his son and successor in 968 or perhaps its creation occupied Hroswitha until her death in 982. Or did she live, as some authorities maintain, to what then would have been an incredibly old age and die in 1002?

Considerable annoyance has been levelled against Hroswitha's

<sup>1</sup> See Charles Magnin, *Théâtre de Hroswitha* (Paris 1845) for various references to Bodo in this article. No copy of the original was procurable.

first editor, Dr. Conrad Celtes, who discovered what was believed to be the unique copy of her writings and published it in 1501.<sup>2</sup> The avid calendar addicts have felt that since Celtes was, after all, four hundred years closer in time to the lady than we of the Twentieth Century, he might have made a little more effort to compile a proper biography. But in our age of personal curiosity, called psychological interest, Celtes' disinterest in the nun's private life is rather refreshing. He and the members of his literary fraternity, the "Rheinische Sodalitat," were far more excited over presenting a Latin writer of German birth than they were about her vital statistics. For just as these men considered the German Holy Roman Empire a continuation of the Imperial Rome of the Caesars, so they definitely considered Hroswitha's literary efforts a continuation of the classic tradition. In her honor, they composed epigrams to demonstrate the rare scholastic excitement which possessed them:

Those gifts her native generation granted to few of her sex,  
Hroswitha did reveal in virginal genius!

Why should we not praise the writings of this German maid,  
Who, were she Greek, would by now have been made a goddess?

How much the righteous deities of Heaven favor the Germans  
You may discern from this learned virgin.

You Greek, you Italian,  
What do you think of this German maid?<sup>3</sup>

It can be readily seen that the Rheinische Sodalitat did not agree that "scholarship" knows nothing of geographical boundaries. Yet, for all his patriotic fervor, Celtes did not answer the question: How did Hroswitha happen to write plays? Homilies, tracts, catechisms, even devotional poems, would seem to be more likely literary areas for a nun to employ her facile pen. Whatever possessed her to enter the theatre?

It was axiomatic long before Marx and Freud that the best way to approach an author is through his works, but, at first glance, Hroswitha's *Opera* are unrewarding as biographical sour-

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

<sup>3</sup> E. H. Zevdel, "Reception of Hroswitha by the German Humanists after 1493," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* (July 1945), pp. 239-249.

ces. Their implications, however, are quite another matter. The introduction to the long pseudo-Vergilian epic on the life of Emperor Otto the Great states that Hroswitha was given the task of writing it as an act of obedience by Abbess Gerberga of the Gandersheim Convent. The Abbess was a cousin of the Emperor, therefore it can be assumed that the royal family knew of the undertaking, may even have commissioned it. Here is further proof that Hroswitha's contemporaries considered her as the continuer of the classic epic tradition. The poems on the lives of Saints Agnes, Pelagius, and Gongolfus tell little more, though Gongolfus, the patron saint of henpecked husbands, was, perhaps, an unexpected subject. But the four remaining poems on the Birth of the Blessed Virgin, the Conversion of Theophilus, and the lives of Saints Basil and Dionysius, and the six plays—*Gallicanus*, *Dulcitius*, *Callimachus*, *Abraham*, *Paphnutius*, *Sapientia*—shed considerable light on the author and her background.

Without exception these poems and plays find their sources in that vast quantity of extra-canonical Biblical literature, decreed by Rome to be lacking in authenticity if not downright heretical. Certainly it was extra-curricular reading in a tenth-century German convent, and Hroswitha admits it:

Now, if it be objected that some parts of my work are taken from apocryphal sources, this was not a fault caused by wanton presumption, but a mistake due to ignorance, for, when I laid the foundations, I was not aware that these were doubtful matters on which I had begun to labor. . . . But, when I recognised this, I was loth to destroy, because that which seems to be falsehood may haply prove to be truth.

[*Praefatio I*]<sup>4</sup>

An astounding statement from a supposedly loyal daughter of Rome!

The questions occur at once: How did she get hold of these doubtful materials? How did she dare defend herself for using them? The answers are quite simple. Although Rome condemned the apocryphal acts and gospels, they were read and venerated by the Catholic Church of the East which was already straining away from the mother church. The saints of Hroswitha are the

<sup>4</sup> Quotations from the works of Hroswitha have all been translated by the author from the text of *Hroswithae Opera*, ed., Karolus Strecker (Leipzig 1906).



saints of the hagiography of the church of the Byzantine Empire and it was from this church that she derived the inspiration for her plays.

The intimate connection between tenth-century Germany and Byzantium is not always considered by historians. They place the time of Hroswitha's entrance into Gandersheim in the Dark Ages and let it go at that, failing to note that, although the rest of Europe was in turmoil with the influence of Christianity at its lowest ebb owing to the intrigues among several rival popes, Germany was enjoying a period of comparative peace and prosperity. She alone among the nations had the leisure and inclination for cultural pursuits. Emperor Otto (936-973) was a strong ruler; his wife was Adelheid of Burgundy, a brilliant, exceedingly well-educated woman whose long residence in Italy prior to her marriage had brought her into contact with Byzantine culture. As Holy Roman Empress, she naturally had great influence, and when it came time for her son, the future Otto II, to marry, she masterfully arranged an alliance with Princess Theophano, sister of Basil II, the Macedonian Emperor.

It was through Theophano that the great culture of Byzantium came directly into Germany. She was a granddaughter of Constantine VII, the author of the *Liber de Cerimoniis*, whose devotion to the hippodrome and the theatre has gone down in history as without precedent, even for an *aficionado* in that pleasure-loving city. Theophano had witnessed the attack launched on the theatre by the Church and had watched the efforts of Constantine to reconcile the theatre-mad city and the censoring ecclesiastics by bringing drama into the churches and substituting religious pageants for pagan spectacles. The theatre, then, which in the West had degenerated into mere exhibitions by strolling mountebanks, was an integral part of Theophano's life. It is, therefore, only reasonable to assume that with her wealth and power and ability she would try to adapt some of the glittering shows of Byzantium to her new life.

And this is where Hroswitha enters the scene. After a few years at Gandersheim as a student, Princess Sophia, daughter of Theophano and Otto II, took the veil there. Bodo records that Theophano visited the convent frequently on holy days and that Dowager Empress Adelheid came there to spend the last years

of her life. Abbess Gerberga, as has already been noted, was the Emperor's cousin. Hroswitha, then, was in daily contact with one or another of the imperial family which was so profoundly Byzantine in its cultural outlook and personal tastes. This fact is corroborated in the first *Praefatio*, in which the nun tells how her first instruction in the writer's art came from the illustrious Abbess Gerberga, who, "With great condescension, explicated certain writers to me, of which she had been taught by men of great learning."

It might be noted here that if Hroswitha received *explications de texte* from Gerberga her residence at Gandersheim must have considerably antedated her profession, for once Gerberga became abbess she would have had no time for teaching. In other words, Hroswitha must also have been a student there.

What sort of education would she have received? Within its medieval limitations, excellent. In addition to the elementary lessons in deportment, table manners, embroidery, and elegant conversation, the girls were taught the trivium—grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Classes were conducted in Latin and private tutors were available for instruction in Greek. Those who survived this lower division were permitted to follow the quadrivium—arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. Hroswitha would have received additional instruction in philosophy and theology and would have been steeped in Holy Writ. And since, to use Allardyce Nicoll's exquisite phrase, "A good latinity was next to godliness," she read the Latin poets and the plays of Publius Terentius Afer as examples of stylistic excellence.

What was Hroswitha's milieu at Gandersheim? Very different from the usual conception of convent life. Abbess Gerberga directed an enormous estate and had a seat in the German Imperial Diet. As her vote was greatly sought after, she would travel, pay visits, receive important political figures and hold feasts in their honor. She could attend classes at St. Emmeran's Monastery at nearby Ratisbon, where the monks were renowned for their learning, and invite the reverend fathers to hold similar classes for her nuns at Gandersheim. It is not at all a stretch of the imagination to identify these monks as the "men of great learning" mentioned by Hroswitha in her third *Praefatio* nor to say further that one of them was doubtless the scholarly Bishop William of

Mainz, the Emperor's brother. It is not at all fantastic to postulate that the "writers" or books which Gerberga explicated were loaned or given to the Abbess by Empress Theophano and put into the hands of the brilliant Sister Hroswitha to use as background material for the literary career which she had definitely decided to follow:

I did not wish the small talent entrusted to me to rust through neglect, lying idle and buried in the depths of a sluggish heart, but rather that it might be beaten out by the hammer of constant devotion and give forth a little tinkle of divine praise. [Praefatio I]

With an abbess sympathetic to secular learning, an empress addicted to the theatre, and the pageant atmosphere of an imperial court, it is easy to see what gradually moved Hroswitha toward playwriting. The spark which ignited her inspiration is told in the second *Praefatio*:

Many Catholics are found doing that which we cannot wholly disavow ourselves; namely, to prefer because of the eloquence of its cultivated speech, the vanity of heathen literature to the edification of Holy Scripture. There are others, moreover, who, while they do cling to the sacred pages, nevertheless read too often the works of Terence, and, while being delighted with the sweetness of his diction, are defiled with the acquaintance of unholy things. Therefore I, the "Loud Cry of Gandersheim" [her literal translation of the name Hroswitha] would celebrate, insofar as my poor talents permit, the praiseworthy chastity of dedicated virgins, in the same manner in which he wrote of the shameful abominations of wanton women!

The influence of Terence on Hroswitha has been the subject of much discussion, so there is no need to repeat it here. Suffice it to say that Terence's plots, revolving around dissipated young men about town, wily thieving slaves, foolish elderly senators, beautiful courtesans, and boastful soldiers might very well have brought a blush to Hroswitha's cheek. Those authorities who maintain that she was also conversant with Plautus leave us to infer that his plays rendered her speechless. While recognizing that, even in the cloister, there must be an occasional change from the stately tread of the *Acta Sanctorum*, she became deeply concerned at the sight of religious, dedicated to God, filling their eyes and minds with such irreligious literature. In addition to her own concern, she would have felt the added impetus of the

Church's attitude, for Empress Theophano would certainly have told her how actors in Byzantium burlesqued and made mock of Christian ceremonies and sacraments, and how playwrights vied with one another to produce yet more ribald blasphemies. Thus it was that Hroswitha determined something must be done, and decided to write some plays herself. They were to be written in the best and most polished Latin at her command and treat of subjects fit to be heard within convent walls.

### GALLICANUS

Her first play, *Gallicanus*, was a most ambitious maiden effort. Her hero was an actual historical personage, one of Emperor Constantine's greatest generals. As the play opens, he is about to depart for the Scythian front. He asks the Emperor for the Princess Constantia's hand in marriage should he return victorious. The Emperor, though aware that his daughter has taken the vow of chastity, is constrained to agree. He reckons without Constantia's resourcefulness. She not only prays for Gallicanus in a prayer of remarkable eloquence, considering the amount of theology the playwright manages to condense into one paragraph, but also sends her two spiritual advisors, John and Paul, to the front in order to give tangible assistance to her earnest desire.

The play proceeds with a blithe disregard of all unities, and soon the opposing forces meet in battle. Gallicanus's troops are yielding under the Scythian attack. "What will happen?" he cries, "My soldiers despise me and yield." At this crucial moment, John calls to him over the battle's din, "Vow to the God of Heaven that you will become a Christian and you shall conquer." Without an instant's hesitation Gallicanus answers, "I do so vow. May my deeds seal it!" Immediately the Scythians surrender and Gallicanus wins the day.

He returns to Rome to give his account of the battle to the Emperor. He takes it to the darkest hour:

*Emperor.* And how did you escape?

*Gallicanus.* My dear companions, John and Paul, persuaded me to make a vow to my Creator . . . and as I opened my mouth to pray, I felt the aid of Heaven. . . . There came to me a youth, bearing a cross on his shoulder, who bade me follow him with drawn sword.

*Emperor.* Whoever he was, he was sent straight from Heaven.

*Gallicanus*. I complied, and straightway on my right hand and left there stood armed warriors.

*Emperor*. The hosts of Heaven!

*Gallicanus*. I doubt it not, and straightway following that youth, I walked unafraid into the midst of the foe.

The hero then makes the astounding announcement that, at his baptism following the victory, he had taken a vow of chastity. The Emperor now acquaints him with Constantia's vow, to which he replies amiably, "I pray she may abide in the same."

The question naturally arises why, since the battlefield conversion would make a most exciting moment, did Hroswitha fail to stage it. The answer is that Hroswitha was following her source. In all accounts of Gallicanus he is represented as telling the story to the Emperor, and, while as a playwright the unities might mean little to her, as a nun she must hesitate to deviate from a saint's legend.

Emperor and Gallicanus go into the palace to greet Constantia, who, surprised and pleased at the General's change of heart, invites him to live with them. But he draws the line at that. He states, "No temptation is greater to be withstood than the lust of the eyes, and it would not be good for me to see this maid too often, whom, as you know, I love better than my parents or my life or my very soul." He then bids them farewell and goes off to live as a hermit. Hroswitha's permitting a glimpse of the depth and reality of the soldier's love is a masterly touch. This fleeting worldly note prevents a scene, filled with expressions of noble virtue, from degenerating into one of mere platitudes. It also indicates a delightful feminine sympathy for the man. Nevertheless, Constantia is not permitted to waver for one moment. She is, throughout, as the author intended, a model to those vacillating sisters in religion who just might be persuaded to delight in Terence, over and above the stern voice of duty.

## GALLICANUS, PART II

Hroswitha takes up the action again in *Gallicanus, Part II*. Thirty years have passed and Rome is now under the rule of Julian the Apostate who is clearing the Empire of Christians. As Hroswitha never had a course in playwriting, she permits the

first victim of the persecution to be none other than her former hero, Gallicanus. In the second scene he is removed from the stage. The Emperor says, "Oh worthy deed!" and turns next to John and Paul. He asks these advisors to serve him but they refuse. He reminds them that he, too, was once high up in the Church but that he quickly discovered that there was no profit in the Christian religion so returned to the old gods of Rome. "Devil's disciple," Paul mutters, under his breath, then says aloud, "You have left all true religion and follow the superstition of idolatry." Julian offers both high rank; they spurn him. He gives them ten days in which to change their minds, but Paul says proudly, "Do what you have already decided to do," and the Emperor sentences them both to death.

Hroswitha, however, refuses to end her play so somberly. The soldier chosen to execute John and Paul has a son. The boy becomes possessed of the devil and the father is convinced that he is being punished for executing the saints. He wails, "I, miserable wretch that I am, obeyed the behest of the ungodly Emperor Julian," and he begs the Christians for help, professing his belief and penitently asking to be baptized. At that very moment the boy is cured and the curtain falls on a scene of pious rejoicing.

Judged even by later miracle plays, neither part of *Gallicanus* can be termed a drama. The characters are mere figure-heads and are manoeuvred in episodic pageant fashion to suit the author's expositions of theology. Yet, it is impossible to read them without being forcibly struck by the nun's own reverence. Her belief is so great that even palpable absurdities become unimportant and a twentieth-century reader, almost in spite of himself, willingly suspends his own belief.

### DULCITIUS

The second play, *Dulcitus*, finds Hroswitha writing in a slightly different vein. Three sisters—Irene, Agape, and Chionia—are condemned to death by Emperor Diocletian who turns them over to Prefect Dulcitus for execution. Dulcitus, however, being a lecherous old pagan, has other ideas. Upon attempting to make love to the sisters, he is suddenly stricken with madness and rushes around the kitchen embracing the pots and pans in the

belief that he has caught them. Shades of the bemused old gentleman of Terence! Here, however, not a wily slave confounds the lecher but the power of God. The audience is regaled with the sight of a Roman senator, covered with pot blacking and pitch, being refused admission to the imperial palace. "What goes on here?" Dulcitius wails, "Am I not arrayed in splendid robes? Am I not gorgeous from head to foot? And yet the porter scorns me as a horrible monster." The maiden Agape comments, "It is most fitting he should appear in body as he is in his mind, possessed of the devil." Finally, furious at his lack of success, Dulcitius commands that the sisters be put to torture and then burned at the stake.

The three sisters are heroines quite foreign to the classic tradition. Their characters are far removed from the meek, subservient Pamphilius and Glycerium of Terence, for the girls have a courage and independence born of virtue and they are completely fearless. Hroswitha doubtlessly intended them as examples of what women could become if they were wholly, militantly Christian. While their nobility may seem a trifle implausible now, perhaps that is an adverse commentary on our own times rather than any criticism of Hroswitha. The sisters did not seem implausible to the contemporary audience which is the important thing. The scenes of Dulcitius' madness were intended for comic relief, and a good actor, even a nun with dramatic flair, could make considerable of them. Pots and pans occupy only a brief space in the action, however. It is as though the playwright suddenly recollected herself, for the action soon returns to proceed on its way to martyrdom and glory.

### CALLIMACHUS

In her third play, *Callimachus*, Hroswitha treads on shakier ground. She calls it, "The hateful madness of unlawful lovers, even such things as may not be heard among us" [*Praefatio II*]. *Callimachus* deals with the affection of a young man for a married woman. Today's audience does not consider this subject taboo but Hroswitha and her audience did.

Callimachus is a bachelor of Edessa, frantically in love with

Drusiana, a respectable matron, who is shocked by his importunities and repulses him emphatically:

*Drusiana.* I wonder, young man, that you speak thus to me. By what right of kinship or legal bond do you love me?

*Callimachus.* Your beauty!

*Drusiana.* My beauty? Go away, you wicked seducer. I'm ashamed to listen to you.

*Callimachus.* You doubtless blush to confess what affection my love arouses in you.

*Drusiana.* Nothing but indignation.

Callimachus finally goes away, vowing revenge, and Drusiana prays for death, lest she not only fall into sin herself but also tempt another to sin.

Her prayer is answered. She is laid in her tomb by her husband but even this does not bring Callimachus to his senses. He bribes the servant, Fortunatus, to admit him to the sepulcher and there falls on his knees beside the bier crying, "Oh! Drusiana, Drusiana, I adored you with all my heart. You rejected me in life, but now—now I have you in my power!" Thought naturally turns to *Romeo and Juliet*, but Hroswitha sees to it that her Callimachus is no Romeo—he receives his just deserts. A serpent glides into the tomb and he and the untrustworthy Fortunatus lie dead.

The scene then shifts to a street in Edessa. Andronicus, husband of Drusiana, and St. John the Evangelist are on their way to the bier to pray when they are confronted by a Youth of Flaming Aspect (a typical description of a Byzantine Angelic Messenger). He bids them hurry so that St. John may raise Drusiana and her unfortunate lover. They obey, and St. John with delightful practicality, first disposes of the snake: "We do not want him harmed again by the bite of a serpent," he says, and then he raises Callimachus. The young man, wholly repentant, confesses his sin and receives absolution. Then the Saint raises Drusiana, who also forgives her onetime lover. But Fortunatus, when raised, refuses to repent: "I'd rather be dead than see such virtue triumph in them," he says surlily. Retribution is swift. Fortunatus's serpent bites swell up and he falls to the ground in agony.

Once the miraculous aspect is accepted, *Callimachus* emerges



as a tightly knit drama with a quite powerful final scene. The character of Callimachus is certainly modelled on the young Athenians whom Terence loved so well, and Fortunatus is similar to the wily slaves. But Drusiana is entirely new. Like Caesar's wife, she is above reproach, but Hroswitha has given her the added virtue of true Christianity which raises her sense of honor above mere ethics, something Terence could never have understood. And neither could he have understood a woman who preferred death to temptation, for his ladies were invariably accommodating. In this respect Hroswitha's heroines mark the beginning of a new tradition in the theatre.

### ABRAHAM

The chief interest in the brief play *Abraham* lies in its resemblance to *Paphnutius* which followed and excelled it. Two hermits, Abraham and Ephraim, find themselves with Abraham's twelve-year-old niece in their custody. They do not know what to do about her, and the only thing that occurs to them is to have her take a vow of perpetual poverty, chastity, and good works. At this early age such a promise is easily given, but once in her teens Mary decides she has had enough of it and runs away with a renegade monk. She disappears completely for two years and then Abraham receives word that she is living at Assos and is a notorious harlot. He disguises himself as a profligate man about town (Hroswitha demanded much of her actors, considering they were nuns) and goes to Mary. His disguise admits him, but once in her presence, he casts aside his gaudy cloak and pleads with her to return to the desert with him:

*Abraham.* Why did you forsake me? Why didn't you tell me you had fallen into weakness, so that I might have helped you and prayed for you?

*Mary.* After I fell, I thought I dare not approach you, holy man that you are.

*Abraham.* But who is sinless, but the Virgin's Son? . . . To err is human, but to continue in sin is damnable. He is not blamed who falls, but he who fails to rise again quickly.

Little by little he persuades her until she finally throws aside the

jewels her lovers have given her and returns with her uncle to the hermitage.

In this scene, remarkable for its contemporary tone, Hroswitha shows consummate tact. She recognized that the play must consider Mary's sin, and that Abraham's comments must not leave even the most innocent novice in doubt, but she does not gloat over it. Her sole concern is that Mary repent, and Mary does. Her reason for writing the play is to demonstrate the great compassion of Almighty God, and although vice is treated realistically, neither underplayed nor avoided, her treatment has the delicacy which only a wholly immaculate mind can bestow. Taste is a much overused word, a too often ridiculed commodity, but Hroswitha's taste in this and similar situations is dependably excellent.

### *PAPHNUTIUS, OR, THE CONVERSION OF THAIS*

The fifth play, *Paphnutius, or, the Conversion of Thaïs*, is Hroswitha's masterpiece. Almost everyone is familiar with Anatole France's novel, *Thaïs*, in which Massenet found the inspiration for his opera, but comparatively few people are aware that France was inspired to write his version of her story by a marionette performance of *Paphnutius*. Of course, in the Hroswitha treatment Paphnutius remains a saint throughout. He is a learned medieval doctor who, as the play opens, is discussing philosophy with a group of his disciples—a scene similar to many in which Hroswitha herself must frequently have taken part. The disciples are quite confused (another touch of realism) and Paphnutius admits that such abstruse doctrines are difficult to understand. Shortly he falls into deep melancholy, and when asked what is troubling him, he says that he is gravely concerned over the soul of the notorious courtesan, Thaïs. The disciples agree that she is in need of the Saint's concern "for she is not unknown to any man." Paphnutius accepts their statement, without inquiring as to the source of their information, and, after a little more conversation, he announces that he will go to Thaïs and exhort her to repentance.

Forthwith he goes to her and she receives him with, "I do not withdraw my presence nor refuse my company to any man,"

but when he asks to speak with her in strictest privacy, she answers, with a sudden flash of truth, "There is no place so hid, so secret, that the recess of it is not known to God." Rejoicing that she is at least aware of the Almighty, Paphnutius begins his exhortation. At first Thaïs listens with amusement, then she becomes angry, but gradually she is moved to sorrow. Finally she calls in her lovers and throws all the gifts they have given her onto a huge bonfire. Then she meekly takes the hand Paphnutius offers her and lets him lead her into a life of penance.

He brings her to a convent, and tells the Abbess that she is to be confined to a narrow cell, without doors or windows beyond a small opening to receive her daily ration of food. The Abbess, shaking her head, says, "I fear her tender spirit can ill endure such affliction." Paphnutius replies, "So grievous a sin must expect a stern remedy." The cell is prepared and when Thaïs is told that it will be her abode for the rest of her life she cries in horror, "How narrow, how dark, how comfortless!" Adamant, Paphnutius tells her that she must say nothing, even in prayer, except, "Thou Who hast created me, have mercy on me." Finally she enters the cell, and the door is sealed.

The entire scene is very moving. Its insight into the frame of mind of a woman, accustomed to every luxury, who has chosen in the name of religion to exist on less than the barest decencies, is remarkable. Lest her capitulation seems to come too quickly, it must be remembered that tenth-century audiences saw nothing unusual in instant conversions; if the penance imposed seems impossibly severe, the hidden austerities of religious life of the time must not be forgotten—the hair shirt, the discipline, the hours of kneeling with outstretched arms in imitation of the Cross. In an age when asceticism was a virtue to be practiced rather than endured and martyrdom was eagerly sought, Thaïs's compliance would have been held highly virtuous and commendable.

Three years pass and Paphnutius receives word that Thaïs is dying. He goes to her at once and tells her that because of her penance she is surely pardoned. This scene is brief and poignant with a heartbreaking moment at the end when Thaïs begs him not to let her die alone. Here Hroswitha reaches her highest stature as a playwright. The character of the erring Thaïs is beautifully and sympathetically realized; Paphnutius is excellent both

in his character of stern moral censor and in his great compassion in the final scene. Were this the only extant play of hers, Hroswitha would still be a playwright with whom to reckon; several centuries elapsed before anything of equal beauty and significance appeared on the Western stage.

### SAPIENTIA

After *Paphnutius* the final play, *Sapientia*, is an anticlimax. Sapientia and her daughters, Faith, Hope, and Charity, come to Rome to convert Emperor Hadrian. The Emperor arrests and tries them in a scene filled with philosophical discussion, most of it drawn from the Roman philosopher, Boethius—a rather strange digression considering Hroswitha's usual directness. The mother and daughters refuse to recant and the girls are put to torture. Sapientia stands by, encouraging them, praying that they may be taken at once to Heaven. Stunned by such resignation, Hadrian releases her, but, after one more prayer, she dies and joins her daughters in death. It is a most extraordinary play, highly stylized, with none of the exaltation of *Gallicanus* and none of the humanity of *Paphnutius*. It is possible that *Sapientia* may have been an early work which Hroswitha revised for some special occasion at Gandersheim for a courtly audience which delighted in lengthy philosophical debate.

A great deal of ink has been spilled in an attempt to determine whether or not Hroswitha's plays were performed. This is rather foolish, for from what is known of Gandersheim and its patrons the plays must certainly have been performed. Objections are raised on the grounds that they would be impossible to stage, but the objectors forget that a medieval audience was accustomed to viewing contending armies, seraphic messengers, diabolic tempters, sacrifices, tortures, and heavenly ascents, separately or simultaneously as the action demanded. And would it not be difficult to imagine so devoted a theatregoer as Empress Theophano failing to see that they were performed once she knew of their existence? What of Hroswitha herself? Had she not written the plays to compete with Terence and what better competition could she provide than an actual performance?

Attempts have been made to assess the Hroswitha influence

on the theatre. For many years it was customary to treat her as an isolated playwright whose *Opera* disappeared into oblivion until their recovery by Celtes. Recent discoveries, however, are rapidly modifying this view. The entire script of *Gallicanus*, without Hroswitha's name appended, has been found in the twelfth-century manuscript, Aldersbach Confessional, and there are other references to indicate that she was not unknown in Europe. The new viewpoint has been further strengthened by the discovery of a second Hroswitha codex at Cologne in 1922. It is entirely possible that the tenth-century nun, who is now the object of much scholarly interest, will eventually be linked to later continental miracle plays, and ultimately to the great miracle cycles of England.

So let us enjoy the portrait we have of her as it has emerged from this short survey of her life, her works, and her times. She was a brilliant, well-educated woman, a dedicated religious who retained the sense of urbanity and courtesy of the knightly society into which she had been born; a lady accustomed to royalty, to intellectual conversation, and one who had a considerable knowledge of the world and its ways; a scholar of sufficient wit and perception to see the possibilities for drama in books her church might adjudge unsound, and with the courage to use them as the sources for six plays, which, in any age or society, would bear the stamp of authentic genius. We may not be able to share her religious exaltation, but if we can comprehend it that will be enough. Certainly we must appreciate her single-handed efforts to Christianize the stage of her own time for the benefit of the stage that followed, and, perhaps, even comprehend the excitement of the French critic, Philatre Charles, who, after reading her plays, was moved to exclaim:

A passionate soul, a superior spirit,  
Who thought to imitate Terence, but who announced Racine!<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For quotation in French see Vignon Retif de la Bretonne, *Poésies Latines de Roswitha, avec une traduction libre en vers français* (Paris 1854), p. 10.

## KING HENRY THE SIXTH PART II: NOTES DURING PRODUCTION

by

JAMES SANDOE

Piecemeal and somewhat breathless letters written through the rehearsal and performance of the Oregon Shakespearean Festival's fourteenth season (1954) have been used for the notes that follow. Because of the nature of the original letters and because the excerpts from them are confined to a single director's impression of a single play in the summer's repertory, a few words of introduction may help.

The festival is described rather fully in its annual program and has been the subject of a number of descriptive articles.<sup>1</sup> It was founded in 1935 by Angus L. Bowmer, present producing director and its principal guide through all the intervening seasons. Mr. Bowmer is and was then a member of the faculty of Southern Oregon College, although the festival has through the years been a civic rather than an academic organization (while enjoying congenial unofficial assistance from the College) and what is perhaps more remarkable for that reason, a self-sustaining organization as well.

The festival stage was constructed from the rather cryptic specifications set forth in the Fortune indenture of 1600 and in Mr. Bowmer's interpretation, omitting the Fortune's third story, stretches fifty-five feet at its extremest width. The pillars of the penthouse are twenty-four feet apart and twelve feet from the curtains of the inner below. The lip of the apron is twenty-seven feet forward from the inner below curtains; the floor of the inner above, twelve feet above the main stage floor

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Margery Bailey, "The Shakespeare Stage in American Theatre," *Colorado Quarterly*, I (Spring 1953), 355-367; also Dr. Bailey's detailed critiques of Ashland season the first of which appeared in *Asides* (Dramatists' Assembly, Stanford, California), No. 1 (1949); James Sandoe, "The Oregon Shakespeare Festival," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, (1950), 5-11.

To the Elizabethan plan a forward curtain has been added like that employed by William Poel in his earliest production of *Hamlet*, Q1., at St. George's Hall, April 16, 1881. Moving between the pillars, drawn as need requires by curtain pages, it has been useful not only for masking the shifts of platforms and furniture, hanging of banners, etc., but also for accenting scenes played on the apron. In 1953 for *The Taming of the Shrew* and again in 1954 for *The Winter's Tale* this curtain was not used, partly in consequence of wider sight-lines from the comfortable stretch of new seating, partly from what may be more archaeological considerations. And there is indication that future seasons will see less use and possible elimination of these forward drapes.

Reconstruction at Ashland ceases with the stage. The audience is seated in the stretch of ground the "groundlings" occupied and there is no circumference of theatre building to set auditors up in balconies or to protect them from occasional rains. Summer rain is conveniently uncommon in the Rogue River Valley, but the 1954 season was uncomfortably and frequently damp. In consequence, the rather fitful ambivalence, which had hauled occasional performances to a local theatre's proscenium stage or the stretches of a school gymnasium, was given over for a different policy. Unless entirely deluged, performances were held on the stage, and under the penthouse: a proceeding which involved a general reblocking only less comfortless than trying to cram the free flow of a production behind the strictures of a proscenium. Audiences came as they would for the incertitudes of fall football and settled to enjoyment with just as much good nature.

The repertory in 1954 consisted of four plays rehearsed from mid-June through July and performed through August. Plays are sorted from the familiar and unfamiliar and in 1954 included a slow-shaping but thoughtful and eventually very exciting production of *Hamlet*, a warmly and meticulously realized production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and an icily brilliant one of *The Winter's Tale*. As is usual at Ashland, they were performed without interruption. Even though there is no clear evidence that they were so played in Shakespeare's day, their gain in coherence and drive is very great. Mr. Bowmer's all

but uncut *Hamlet* played only three hours; two and one-half hours is considered ample for most of the longer plays.

Since 1948 one of the summer's four plays has been a history beginning with *King John* and moving, year by year, through the historical chronology. We should, of course, have known from that first excitement in discovering how tellingly *King John* held its stage that even earlier histories would get up from the awful flatness of the page and stride boards boldly, but we were all perhaps understandably nervous, in 1952, at the prospect of following seasons of producing the rich succession which, beginning with *Richard II* and proceeding through the two parts of *Henry IV* and the glowing assurances of *Henry V*, bumps up against the 'prentice rhetoric of *Henry VI*.

Our uncertainty reached such a pitch that there was talk among us of digesting the three parts of *Henry VI* into one and getting it all over with in a single season. Fortunately a more academic judgment prevailed, and we set ourselves to find out with Part One how this mass of rhetoric and bloody stage direction lived. Live it did, to the enormous delight of all the company and to the surprised delight of our 1953 audience. Thereafter there was no question of digesting or abandoning. We were committed to producing the second and third parts. Thus, 2 *Henry VI* completed the quartet of plays for 1954.

The young company of players meets in Ashland in the middle of June but the directors have, of course, been fitfully busy for most of the winter and spring. Once directorial assignments have been made by the producing director the general stage movement is planned, particular problems considered and the prompt book prepared. This involves a good deal of consultation (by mail and, in critical instances, telephone) among Mr. Bowmer, Dr. Margery Bailey (the academic director) and the directors of the individual plays.<sup>2</sup> And not all of the puzzles are solved, even theoretically, when the directors arrive to meet the genial if nervous collection of players who must realize or correct the prompt books' theories.

<sup>2</sup> Directors in 1954 were: Angus L. Bowmer (*Hamlet*); Allen Fletcher, of the Carnegie Institute of Technology (*The Merry Wives*); H. Paul Kliss, of the Oumansky Magic Ring Theatre, Portland, Oregon (*The Winter's Tale*); James Sandoe of the University of Colorado (2 *Henry VI*). Dr. Margery Bailey, of Stanford University, was Director of the Educational Division of the festival. Frank Pinnock, actor and fencer, served as choreographer of the fencing match in *Hamlet* as well as the combats in 2 *Henry VI*.



"Tryouts" usually occupy two painful days, tight with tensions and thick with hopeful decision. The first of these is usually the actors', demonstrating in prepared speeches and scenes what ten minutes will show of their individual capacities in reading and stage movement. Thereafter the directors request a succession of readings and retire, in what is normally an all-night session, to fix upon tentative casts which are, by and large, permanent casts.<sup>3</sup>

The first rehearsal of *Henry* (Thursday evening, June 17) was occupied in reading through the entire play with glosses to suggest the probable treatment of this scene or that and the general emphasis discovered by the text. Cuts were indicated when (as rarely) they occurred: II,i,31-53 which carries the quarrelsome asides of Gloucester and the Cardinal to the promise of a duel from which they are distracted by the news of the Duchess' arrest; III, ii, 82-120, the latter half of Margaret's long tirade; a line or two in the Cade scenes to eliminate (IV, vi-vii) one of the mob's combats; and—the only significant cut—all of IV,x in which Cade is killed by Iden. This implied omitting Iden's presentation (V,i,64ff) of Cade's head to the King. The design of this cut was partly to reduce 2 *Henry VI* (3162 lines) to approximately the length of 1 *Henry VI* (2677 lines) and "justified" on the ground that Cade's discomfiture at the conclusion of IV,viii is sufficient dismissal of him.

The play's separate scenes, numbered from one through fifteen, were now presumably ready for "blocking." For rehearsal purposes the text had been divided into three parts: Scenes 1-8 (I,i-II,iv), 9-12 (III,i-IV,iii) and 13-15 (IV,iv-V,iii). Books and pencils in hand the actors would note entrances, general stage movements and any corrections of reading that emerged.

One final note before the excerpts begin. *Henry VI, Part II* is, as its title suggests, a piece of a larger whole; but it is also a self-contained observation of the fiercely selfish rivals who sought either to dominate the pious, honest Henry or, in the case of York, to supplant him. It begins almost directly from the vicious hint with which the first part concludes: Suffolk, as busy with lust as ambition, contriving the marriage of Margaret to

<sup>3</sup> Casts are recruited from the whole company. In 2 *Henry VI* Mr. Browner played Cade, Mr. Fletcher played Gloucester and Mr. Kliss was the King. Mr. S. . . . Nym in *The Wives* and Second Gentleman in *The Tale*. — Editor's note.

Henry for his private delight and public advancement; and it concludes on as clear a comma: York's forces ascendant and the King hustled toward temporary safety in London by his ambitious and frantic queen. We have marked, meantime, the calculated murder of the honest Lord Protector, Gloucester, and watched the whimsical sequel to the King's unexpectedly forceful banishment of Suffolk as that worthy is executed summarily by the piratical "Lieutenant." We see as well the cynical rise of York, assisted by the demagogue (confused by some editors with a "rebel"), Jack Cade, who is cruelly triumphant in two of the play's most blood-curdling scenes. York's banners are carried highest at the close and we have been introduced to two of his sons, one of whom (Richard) is in less than twenty lines already budding toward his ripe blooming as Richard III.

#### *June 17*

The read-through of *Henry* was completed, relievingly, within the three-hour rehearsal time but with, I am sure, very little comprehension in spite of designedly inflammatory comment to the cast which must have a pretty dim sense of its theatrical qualities. Here as before with the unfamiliar plays, the cast will have to learn not only the special excitement of the older historical "heavers" but the pleasures of realizing it.

#### *June 19*

The first blocking session got me through only six of the eight scenes scheduled and this was quite as far as I had any reason to expect. I left it with a less devastating sense of inadequacy only because I recalled the discouragement after last year's first rehearsals of Part One. I keep on feeding myself hope for the production because the histories are bound to look blocklike with those masses of nobles standing around proclaiming. And I defend myself from deeper doubts by insisting that those same worthies, leaping about reacting like mad, would lose us all focus. The text should have essential stage movement as the plan stands and stiffness must be erased by convincing the players of the vital importance of smaller "responses" that will keep them all unobtrusively alive.

But I found myself peering blindly at the text and jerry-

building here and there (or, again, simply correcting myself) during that first rehearsal when stage fright is particularly intense in me. A blocking rehearsal is always trying, and between feeling that one has managed to do too little and feeling that what one has done is very muzzy and ill defined, it's an enormous relief to see that the muzziness here can be corrected by a single cross, and the clotted quality there relieved by moving (say) the rogue Simpcox from the huddled main stage onto a virgin apron.

*June 22*

Certainly the difference tonight was striking: I did a good deal of intermittent fussing with details, and stopped any continuity, but the lucidity was very much greater and the players seemed to be feeling rather than fumbling their ways for the most part.

Caught half a dozen spots which need particular attention: notably a much too limited movement in York's first soliloquy, as well as several readings within it that need sharpening. In the genealogy ordeal (II,ii) the problem is not too little movement, little as there is, but a need for acuteness in readings. It is a scene for ear rather than eye.

We went slowly through scenes 1-6 and then blocked 7 with its dismissal of Gloucester and the Peter-Horner fight (quarter-staves with sandbags attached). I will be forever astonished at the snail's pace of blocking and the breathless speed the scene has in repetition. My Warwick had an ingenious alternative treatment to suggest for Gloucester's dismissal especially as the Queen is involved in it. It has more open malice than the one I set and fixes itself with awful pertinency to the lines. I fancy I ought to change. One other scene smoothed into sense was that of the Duchess' arrest (I,iv) with its conjurations. If I can get Roger Bolingbroke to make a straight back and incorporate some crisp and larger gestures, he'll be a fine showy wizard.

*June 24*

A fairly astonishing evening at least in a mechanical sense. The company has gone bookless for a long third of the play, just a week since we settled to its first reading. They played it without interruptions from me and with few from the prompter in

just an hour and ten minutes. It was all, of course, flattened like a pancake, readings, stage movement and the rest of it losing even the preliminary refinements in great measure. But the large movement and the essential relationships held tight and seemed coherent.

This is a good point at which to catch minor mechanical confusions: it is awkward for Suffolk, at the opening, to carry the scroll. Let the Queen's lady-in-waiting carry it, present it to the curtain page who, at Suffolk's summons, carries it to Gloucester. . . . In larger matters: Gloucester's response to the offensive articles contained in the scroll needs to be more deliberate, less simply enraged. The scroll should drop from his hands because he's too sick to read further, not be hurled because he is in a pet. His furies are, to be sure, part of the text, acknowledged by himself (I,iii,155), but might here at the outset appear whimsical pettishness especially to an audience not yet wound into the series.

The Gloucester-Duchess scenes (particularly I,11) show strength from a special rehearsal the other night and so does the brief Hume sequence in the same scene. It is far more lithely Machiavellian than before. The magician is more cynical, and it begins to look as if his scenes and the other hokey pokey will have a nice tease and bite.

### *June 26*

We blocked the long stretches of scenes 9 and 10, first laboriously and then returning over each without pause to rough-check their effectiveness as well as fix them in the players' memories. . . . Then we managed, time running fast, a first sketch of the scene in which Suffolk, captured by the pirates, defies them arrogantly and has his head hacked off.

Save for occasional but rich glints of his quality, Kliss moves and speaks without much more than mechanical precision. He cannot be showy as the King, but both his precision and intensity will be thoroughly tested if, as seems probable, he makes a telling whole of the pallid Henry, passing from earnest, blind pieties past long stretches of silence as the whole court has its raging say (leaving him to nod) to such a moment as his fierce

banishment of Suffolk—a moment which none of the rest quite anticipates.

Suffolk and Margaret are separately effective and promise to be hair-raising when, after all the bold but voiceless preliminaryaries, they state their passion (the only honest thing about either) fully in that bitter parting. This indeed seems to me the scene which welds rhetoric and feeling most firmly in the whole of the play and it should be nicely jarring to an audience which has had sound reason to hold the pair at arm's length as Villains and here, running full into the lyricism of their passion, finds tears welling.

The only clearly weak spot I can see is Walter Whitmore, a small role but a vivid little one which, against the competence of even Soldiers and Messengers (the season's Hamlet is one attending Soldier and another is playing Ford in *The Merry Wives*) may show pretty dully unless I fetch up my most desperate devices.

June 29

Tonight, and taking a very deep breath, I began with the first of the Cade scenes and through a slippery hour blocked what in repetition took about eight minutes. The players are alert and we sketched, laboriously, a sort of subdued fever which looks as if it would develop into a suitably nasty disease. Certainly the brutal manhandling of the Clerk, succeeded by Cade's slash at one of his ebullient lieutenants, ought to turn gay grave with a lurch even for sluggards in the audience.

It's quite impossible to judge the following scene: the Queen clutching Suffolk's head down right while the King contemplates the cares Cade has begot up left, Buckingham and Say attending. Of all the scenes in the play it frightened me most in anticipation and at present I find myself either numb or absurdly content that it will hold. This assuming that the Queen can summon up the racking sobs which should begin and punctuate it as the King, concerned with Lord Say, is still alert to her agony past his own preoccupation.

After this slow but not discouraging start to the evening we began at the outset and returned through the first part past

one brisk spatter of rain. . . . The pace is slow and there is much detail to be added. It looked awfully monolithic to me, scene by scene. Certainly I have planned movement at a minimum and while it may be enough when performance pace is established, I'm conscious now of a Stonehenge of actors standing about while X or Y is speaking the speech more or less as I prayed him speak it.

Certainly there was much that was encouraging; not least the fantastic combat between Peter and Horner which the players moved into with remarkable assurance, and Pinnock's astute choreography: Peter, all terror and reflexes, winning over the older, experienced Horner only because that latter worthy is almost blind drunk. It looks about three blows too long, but of course it is not yet paced to playing any more than the rest of the proceedings are.

For the most part I let things run through by their own momentum, stopping only a few times to mend or alter but dictating a stream of notes which, as usual, will take hours to enlarge and type, actor by actor, before the next rehearsal. Indeed, this procedure of dictating rough notes and then typing slips for each of the players consumes as much time after each rehearsal as the rehearsals themselves. Tonight I found myself watching secondary players and making notes rather for them than for the principals all of whom have "presence" which I must be wary not to admit as a substitute for performance.

### *July 1*

Eleven o'clock and back again from a rehearsal of *Henry*. This time a slower go through the middle part with numerous stops to mend and occasionally to refine, books still in hand but assurance growing. Then back again to pick up the first part through the Simpcox scene, which needs most work, being a spray of masses of people, short lines and quick cues the dropping of any one of which mucks things up. We've a long way to go.

I spent the afternoon waiting in a good blaze of sun, which was welcome among many overcast afternoons, for a rehearsal in Nym that didn't transpire. But I was able to check, rather feverishly, the plan for the final scenes: the last complex Cade

scene and the muddle of sequences which make up the fifth act. I'll block it on Saturday, and by Tuesday lines for the second part should be reasonably sure. By the end of next week we should be able to begin run-throughs, setting in trumpet and drums which are certainly an exhilarating part of the structure.

I guess I'm a director by accrual: I see in preliminary planning a sort of bare outline and, when it is realized by the players, can add detail. Both Fletcher and Kliss seem to have the sort of visual imagination which comprehends a stagefull of actors in all of their relationships and all of the other directors see spectacle more easily (and more congenially) than I. Warwick was counting cast tonight to see how many could be added to swell the Cade mob. I thought at first uh-huh and then caught back my convictions to the premise that an audience, given advice, accepts supposes. Certainly they accepted four men as an army last summer, and just as certainly the Chorus in *Henry V* adjures the audience to a congenial exercise of imagination. So we will have no swelling of the mob but a concentration upon its present modest membership to suggest how they may multiply themselves, partly by ad-libbing, partly by filling the huge spaces of the stage with alert attention each to the other.

There appears to be a heartening, if too easy, feeling among the company that *Henry VI* is well on its way; mostly because the young, defeated in their first attempts to read it, are staggered that anything at all comes out of it. And this is our chief advantage with audiences, too, although I fancy they'll carry off a poignant recollection of Gloucester's honesty without realizing how brilliantly Kliss is playing the King—a wonderfully managed mixture of anguish, incertitude, piety and sudden rage, all perfectly controlled but so delicate in the robust company that it will be lost in part. Yet its effect seems bound to be, even among the sluggards, just about what it should be.

### July 3

*Henry VI* is, although mighty roughly, blocked through its last line, including the dizzying coil of the final scene which begins on the apron; moves to the main stage, with the inner below in which York kills Clifford (in a stretch of combat which Pinnock has contrived for horrifying viciousness, less swords

and skill than gouged eyes and the muscles of a strangler); then feverishly back to the main stage as Richard, one arm withered and the other as adept as a snake's tongue and fangs, cuts down the honest, cumbersome Somerset; thence to the apron as the Queen thrusts the King toward temporary safety; and at last to the main stage again for the final episode: York triumphant and hung about with many banners.

This is the last of the season's four plays to have been sketched totally, but oddly it's the first to have assumed clear shape and size. Within the festival it seems to have a particular place in affection, not least because the most ancient of us is delighted to see the vitality of the chronicles apparent again and because the younger members of the company are, again, quite incredulous that the play has "so much blood" in it.

### *July 8*

Parts 1 and 3: The cast sailed into it as sanguine as the Spanish Armada and came out about as badly . . . distracted by the urgencies of this play and all their parts in the other three plays, emerging quite foolishly dashed not only by their own forgetfulness but by my intrusions to lend, add and persuade. With hitches and bumps we fetched our way through both parts, working especially for fluidity in the final scene and nagging minutely with the rich detail of the final Cade sequence, not getting very far but getting there, I hope, with some assurance through many repetitions.

### *July 10*

I am at this point blind to 2 *Henry VI* as a play, alert only to the succession of details that make it up. The evening's rehearsal comprised parts 2 and 3. . . . The largest care is Cade's mob which is now alive, now quite dead in response. Whether I can reason and illustrate and argue and bully them into steadily sustained response I still don't know. They range, as any mob would, from the conscientious and pretty effective to the distracted and immature (gum in jaw) who have always to be reminded of the importance of each to the vitality of the whole. I have a dotting of notes for principals, but the largest note is to "mob" in the hope that I can convince them of their col-



lective weight and their capacity to negate the scene by any individual irresponsibility.

Actors vary dizzily from the thoughtful and adept to the earnest and blank. X is defeated by a simple pronunciation. Y by an allusion which needs gloss and here is Z who wants to join me in thinking through a character with half a dozen speeches. I'm certainly not going to run Rorschachs on the evidence but one must be considerably nervous about the I-am-inward set of subjectives who scorn the implication that this or that character is just a sketch of one simple urge.

### July 13

The first run-through, its final scenes without book for the first time, looked in essentials singularly encouraging for all that it ran downhill hideously at the last and had to be nudged along by almost perpetual prompting. It does appear that Thursday should allow us to begin that gathering together and the slow build toward dress rehearsals which might allow us responsible performances. . . . The mob is finding feet and its voices. The pace is too slow, here and elsewhere, and must be a graver care just as projection must and the music, which came in tonight, and needs various additions and subtractions.

### July 17

The past two rehearsals have been exceptionally instructive: the first showed certain great gains and some frightful gaps which may be illustrated by the gaudiest of them. Suffolk gained greatly in intensity and most of the men made similar strides; but the Queen, playing artfully but at her former level, seemed suddenly quite out of focus and, by contrast with these fierce nobles, the princess in a fairy tale.

Half a dozen little moments are suddenly crucial: the murder of Gloucester (interpolated from the *Contention*<sup>4</sup>), the final lines of Suffolk's last scene which threaten to cancel out by their ineptitude the savage excitement of the contention between Suffolk and the Lieutenant which, as played, is electrically tense and flashing.

<sup>4</sup> "The text is that of the Folio (1623), with some hints from . . . the anonymous *First Part of the Contention betwixt the Two Famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster with the Death of the Good Duke Humphrey* (1594)"—From "The Director's Note" in the program of the Festival (Ashland 1954).

Any Ashland day is dogged by special cares: a staff meeting, a fit of temperament, this care about properties and that one about costumes and the evernag about photographs which imply hours of make-up set between the planning and the execution. These cares seem now to multiply as dress rehearsals are upon us. They are the days which breed specious troubles which puff up like balloons and distract us from urgent matters which will ultimately be far more vital. By now, too, typing notes for the members of the company after rehearsal consumes *twice* the time rehearsal itself has consumed. But the notes, set down for more leisurely consideration, seem to me worth their toll of time in results. And saving them for individual sorting is a great economy of the whole company's time.

The play gained far more than pace tonight. Previous gains were confirmed, half a hundred notes on matters small but telling were suddenly realized. Best of all was a general ease and assurance which held past minor fluffs, costume muddles (both the ladies were in costumes which take excruciating manoeuvring) and a general increase of intensity with pace. The Queen's final scene with Suffolk now has a frightful ferocity just as his own final scene (with the Lieutenant) has a kind of galvanic property as they exchange defiances. Cade, from a lurch toward the sympathetic pixy, has turned suitably ruthless and the whole sequence (black-washing and mud-slinging) begins to be properly frightening. I do not care how many playgoers make quick transitions to the modern application of the "Lesson"; all I want is to let them begin laughing and then find that it won't do. But whether the audience makes applications or not, the whole contemporary hysteria and suspicion of Eggheads is there in frightful illustration.

*July 27*

Our first dress rehearsal left me in a very peculiar state, three-quarters numb and one-quarter smug. While the proceedings go pretty smoothly they are so familiar by now that their effect, good or bad, is no longer clearly apparent. But this is the season for snit born of desperation: this detail is not ready, for all our waiting, and that one seems as incompetent as if rehearsals had begun yesterday.

July 31

The second (final) dress rehearsal looked to me like a performance in spite of minor fidgets and a sense that it could explode almost anywhere gaudily. There was some nice improvising in the fantastic Peter-Horner fight, a pretty volatile affair, and although there was one ostentatiously missed exit, the play didn't bother to stop for it.

What one sees and hears is rich stuff: the first assault on the eyes is stunning, a great bold spread of color focused on the thrones, hedged about by banners hanging in ranks from the inner above railing. Tympani and horns bring on the pages, see the curtains opened, watch the entrance of King and Protector succeeded by the entrance of Suffolk and the Queen. Then the beat of the verse asserts itself, coruscated with costume-jewelry figures. The sense is plain, the eventfulness incessant and the busyness of special incident (Simpcox' imposture, the Cade scenes with their bloody violence, the Cardinal's awful death) breaks the succession of rhetorical scenes in which Gloucester is falsely accused, defends himself, hears his death planned, etc.

August 4

I was variously benumbed, interested and distraught through the first performance but there were two external measures of interest. Last year's first house for *1 Henry VI* was 250; this year's 450. The histories are always poor relations (last night's first house for *The Merry Wives* was nearly 700) but this measure between two obscure plays—the first and second parts of *Henry VI*—is pleasant. We had planned a deliberate and rather attenuated curtain call which was supposed to exhaust the warmest applauses. The audience, teased or tickled, required a second and the amiable if gruff giant who runs the switchboard said, "Well, you have a show." Then, fearing this was extravagant, added that the evening was cold and people were no doubt warming themselves.

Whatever we have, it took two hours and thirty-six minutes to play, a minute longer than the second dress rehearsal. But it seemed to flow with assurance. All sorts of special doubts crowd in, notably as to the handling of the scene in which the Queen fondles Suffolk's severed head (wrapped in red taffeta).

I don't know, still, how far it's effective and tonight's audience didn't teach me much. Their response to the Cade scenes was distinct: they began by laughing as we all expected but thereafter the ferocity of Cade and the little sprawl of mob caught their fun in the throat and turned it sour, especially as the second scene culminated in the harrowing of the wretched-honest Lord Say and his haling offstage to be brought back (a head on a pike) an instant later, the mob growling and giggling madly.

### *August 18*

Now that performances have begun there's little more than routine to report save when (as on last Friday the 13th) the heavens open and wash a performance away without warning. I fussed about the rain not at all, but I did apprehend untimely wonders of the next presentation, scheduled last night. I was confirmed to this degree: the noddly curtain pages missed one late entrance and left Somerset's body on stage while the King fled over the battlefield. Well enough, to that point, and even possessed of an unexpected color; but damnation on the change crew poised to remove banners and set in the streamers which decorate and hint the finality of the last scene. The pages bumbled in late, but the actors made the changes in spite of it and we streamed from the heavens to finish the play.

I cannot, at this point, see any serious weakness in the production, for all I may deplore this detail or that. It has its own rather deliberate, blocklike movement on the stage; but this is, I am convinced, a quality of the early chronicles. Apart from textual inconsistencies of situation (the hawking and the mysteries) and of character (allowing the abysmal Suffolk a final moment of sheer arrogance which is as impressive as it is false) it has a wonderful pulse beat which hammers at its auditors, inflaming them into warming if absurd pleasures.

Now gloomy, now gloomier, now a little altered by wily contrivers, it's an odd play, admitting little or no overt expression from the audience. The Simpcox sequence allows them one or two clear laughs, but Cade only lets them begin so, then bottles them up in horror. What surprised and continues to surprise me is the enthusiasm with which our audiences beat their palms well beyond any requirement of politeness.

August 26

The final performance is concluded and while summary is difficult it may be useful to set down some miscellaneous notes and considerations.

First, as a play it is eminently stageworthy. It may have little memorable verse and much of that (Suffolk's curse, the Lieutenant's gaudy blabbing) is self-conscious artifice. But it catches the ear and the beat of the iambics and the hortatory pull of the rhetoric ring with emotion. Actors make a good deal of difference, too. The King's defense of Gloucester and later his prayer of doubt (which is especially stiff looking on the page: III,ii,136ff) have a transcendent excitement. So too the odd bits and pieces of Gloucester have been melted into a deeply moving character in a performance which distinguishes with perfect clarity the opposing integrity and sentimentality of the Duke and makes them parts of the same man.

Among other things I observe the effect of our new and far wider sight-lines which have led to some, but not enough, re-blocking to spread scenes from the main to the side stages. The Cade scenes were planned to be concentrated between the pillars to make the small mob adequate. And this still seems right on that score although I'm aware that for some spectators the mob, never numbering more than sixteen, seems inadequate. Here perhaps is one point at which I am as lonely as Gloucester—still persuaded that a minimum, actively engaged, is better than a massed stage.

In this close a retrospect the pleasures of *Henry* seem manifold. There was the brassy feline York, moving with silky assurance; the fierce pride of the Duchess of Gloucester; and the King, luminous throughout and enormously, if quietly, telling during the long silences of that part. The effectiveness of Gloucester, the trickiest piece of casting in the company, may be gauged by the burst of applause which always met him at the curtain. Also gratifying were the very late blossoming of young Clifford and the acrid assurances of young Richard.

Among those events that cut most deeply into memory would be the parting of Margaret and Suffolk which was the rich

culmination of the hints they had managed earlier; the brilliant collision of the Lieutenant and Suffolk; the response of the King and Queen (both pantomimic) to the Peter-Horner combat: she, with an awful little tight smile, perched on the outer edge of the throne, consumed with excitement by the violence; he, sunk back into the deep stretches of the great chair, looking sick with apprehension. Then the moment when we last saw Gloucester (before that honorable man's murder) flanked by a pair of banners, straining helplessly between the honest, perturbed King and the surrounding wolves.

The whole production profited by the physical disposition of the players across the wonderfully fluid reaches of the stage and the furious pace achieved by freedom from the conventional theatre's intermissions and pauses to change scenery. And bringing to each performance a larger life was the Pinnock choreography of all the combats, exciting and, equally vital, evocative in terms of character.

Most of all the satisfaction has been more general than these specifics might suggest: the keen delight of watching a company conviction that this unpromising stuff was, after all, genuinely dramatic and worth their meticulous regard. The consequence was, so far as I am a judge, a performance immediate, diverse and persuasive and one which found, in large measure, the excitements so tightly locked in the pages of the text that they seem to defy disclosure.

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# THE FINANCES OF AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY THEATRE

*by*

EMMET L. AVERY

The theatre historian is frequently thwarted in his desire to understand the daily operation of a professional theatre of the past. Perhaps because contemporaries or researchers found the material more glamorous, he has access to information concerning actors and plays of certain periods in the annals of the American and English stages, but rarely does he come upon materials which throw light on the actual management and budget of an old, yet well-known, playhouse. Therefore, one can only be grateful to discover that somehow two centuries ago two account books were kept, which give in detail the daily activities of Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in London, and which eventually found their way into the British Museum. These manuscript ledgers, filed as Egerton 2265 and 2266, concern the seasons of 1724-1725 and 1726-1727 when John Rich, who had opened the theatre in 1714, was patentee and, in effect, manager, producer, and director, with an occasional fling at acting the role of Harlequin in his famous pantomimes. Although these ledgers list the plays and income from each performance, they deal primarily with expenditures. They are the most nearly complete records of the sort available for a London theatre in operation after the reopening of the playhouses in 1660.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These ledgers represent, however, only part of the memoranda kept in the business offices of Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, for a note at the end of the 1724-1725 record states that the treasurer's settlement of the season's operations was based upon entries in "nine severall Books," some of which resembled presumably the other scattered financial records extant for the early Eighteenth Century: a nightly listing of the plays and receipts at Lincoln's Inn Fields in a series of volumes beginning in 1714-1715 known as "Rich's Register" (the earliest is in the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D. C.); a nightly record from 1726 to 1729 which lists the number of persons present at Lincoln's Inn Fields and the receipts in each section of the theatre—on stage, in boxes, pit, slips, and galleries along with the free list, if any (Harvard Theatre Collection). Many expense vouchers of Drury Lane Theatre between 1712 and 1716 can be seen in the Folger Shakespeare Library, the British Museum, and the Enthoven Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

These two account books, apparently, are based on other records but they are more inclusive. They concern a theatrical enterprise operating in 1724-1725 on a seasonal budget of approximately £10,700 for a repertory program of 167 nights. With the list of the plays are given receipts, including a breakdown on benefit nights into the money taken in at the box office and advance sales by the performer whose benefit it was to be.<sup>2</sup> Much more illuminating are the detailed disbursements, including payments to John Rich and to actors, actresses, singers, and dancers; to tradesmen for purchase of scenery, machines, and wardrobes; for rents and interest; for printing, lighting, heating, taxes, and music, as well as the wages of the non-acting employees. As the 1726-1727 season followed a similar pattern, the 1724-1725 records will be drawn upon here to demonstrate the financial practices and kinds of expenses incurred.

It is clear, first of all, that John Rich's management had well-established rates and methods of payment. The basis of accounting was the acting day. Very few of the personnel received a stipulated monthly or annual salary; instead, almost everyone, no matter what his status, was paid a specific sum only for each day on which the theatre presented a program. (As we know from numerous complaints, the players and other employees found the long summer vacations and the six weeks of enforced idleness, when a member of the royal family died, difficult times.) Because the acting night was the basis for the payment of wages and salaries, the theatre's treasurer put as many types of expenditures as possible on that basis. For example, the rent was paid regularly at £3 12s. daily, totalling £601 4s. and was in full payment of the typical agreement between proprietor and shareholder (or renter, as he was commonly called) which incorporated a clause specifying that each lessor had first call on the theatre's intake for a set sum, usually between 1s. and 3s. nightly, and free admittance to the house for any performance during his lifetime. Similarly, the Chocolate Rooms were listed at 8s. John Rich, as patentee, received £1 13s. 4d. and his brother, Christopher M. Rich, usually had 6s. 8d. for services rendered. Even

<sup>2</sup> As this portion of the entries has been published in *Notes and Queries*, April 1, 15, 22, and 29, 1933, these receipts will not be discussed in detail here. A more complete account of the whole structure of theatre financing in the Eighteenth Century will appear in *The London Stage, 1660-1800* in preparation by W. B. Van Lennep, G. W. Stone, Jr., A. H. Scouten, and E. L. Avery.



though the treasurer entered the remuneration of the actors, actresses, singers, dancers, boxkeepers, guards, musicians, barbers, and others on a daily basis, the wages were usually paid on Saturdays.

Of necessity, certain charges, such as taxes or assessments which accumulated over long intervals, were generally paid semi-annually. This is pointed up by the treasurer's entry on October 22, 1724 which shows he paid £2 rs. 2d. for "The poors Rate for half a Year due at Michaelmas." Entries for tradesmen appeared at irregular intervals and they were usually for a fairly large sum indicating that they covered an accumulation of purchases.

At Lincoln's Inn Fields, as elsewhere, human frailty kept the bookkeeping system from functioning as planned. Time and again players asked for an advance with the usual result that toward the end of the season only a small fraction of their earnings remained.

Although the systematization did not work perfectly, it was necessary particularly to keep the theatre from showing a deficit on benefit nights. If the money taken in at the door did not equal a given sum, known as the nightly charge, the actor usually had to make good the deficit out of his advance sale of tickets. Hence the account book shows constant entry of the components of the nightly charge:

rent, £3 12s	barber, 5s
chocolate rooms, 8s	candles, £2 2s
law charges, £1 1s	bill setters, 9s
John Rich, £1 13s 4d	newspaper advertisements, 4s 6d
C. M. Rich, 16s 8d or 6s 8d	"side drums" for the band, 2s
guards, 14s 6d	
music, £3 14s 2d (157 nights),	
£3 10s 10d (4 nights), £3 6s 8d (6 nights)	

To these the treasurer presumably added a nightly estimate of other items not so regularly allocated on the daily basis, such as the printers' charges for playbills to post around London, which came to about £150 for the season, or around 17s. nightly. It is interesting, but not surprising, to note here a characteristic of theatrical financing during the Eighteenth Century—the gradual rise in the nightly charge. Whereas in 1700 it had been around £34 it had become £40 by 1724-1725 and by mid-century it had reached £60.

Naturally the entries for salaries show them to be the largest single expense, for besides the amounts paid the performers, they show the wages paid to all personnel engaged in selling and taking tickets, in heating, lighting, and cleaning the theatre and in assisting at performances.

During the 1724-1725 season 44 actors were employed: 28 men and 16 women. Lacy Ryan (1694-1760) commanded the highest salary. For the season he received £225, part for his acting and the rest for his assistance at rehearsals. Only three other men received more than £100: James Quin, a friend of Ryan's, earned approximately £180; Anthony Boheme, £160; Thomas Walker, £103. Five actors earned between £50 and £99 and ten between £20 and £49. A very youthful performer, such as Merrivale, received only £2 8s. 4d. for the whole season.

Only the principal actors had benefits which, more often than not, were a fine source of additional income for them. For example, at Quin's benefit on March 18, 1725 his advance sale amounted to £96 4s. In one night he earned as much as he regularly did in half the season.

During the Eighteenth Century a double standard for salaries existed. The women were given important roles and played them equally as well as the men, yet only one of the 16 actresses at Lincoln's Inn Fields earned more than £100. She was Mrs. Jane Bullock who ranked fourth on the acting list and received £135. Two women earned between £50 and £99 and four others between £20 and £49. While the five leading actors received £770 the five ranking actresses only got £350. The salaries of the 28 men totalled about £1,450; those of the 16 actresses £475. The preponderance of men on the staff simply conformed to the needs of the company since most plays required twice as many men as women.

The women came into their own with singing and dancing. Among the vocalists there was Richard Leveridge, a perennial London idol. He received about £150 for the season. He was professionally (and financially) outranked by two women: Mrs. Isabella Chambers, who earned nearly £160, and Mrs. Barbier, who took advantage of the rage for Italian songs by securing not only a total of £200 but also the rare guarantee of a flat sum for her performances.

The gap between the salaries paid top performers and the rank and file was even greater for singers and dancers. Signor Gaetano Phillippo Rochetti, who also possessed an exotic Italian quality, was fourth in rank but he received only £54. Eight singers, with salaries totalling £580, appeared regularly. In comparison with the 1,000 to 2,000 guineas paid some Italian opera singers at the King's Theatre all these salaries were very small.

There were more dancers than singers: 11 men and 4 women. Heads over the others was Francis Nivelon, a Frenchman with talented heels, who received £268 for the season, a sum surpassing even that paid the best actor and three times as much as that received by any other dancer. Altogether the 11 men earned £740 and the women, £165. It can be seen that the singers and dancers on the regular payroll cost John Rich about £1,490 as against about £1,925 for nearly twice as many actors and actresses. Rich had learned in the previous decade that song and dance, musical spectacle, and pantomime paid well, and he gave the spectators liberal portions of entr'acte entertainment and afterpieces.<sup>3</sup> The receipts for the 1724-1725 season show how well the box office profited by songs and dances. On November 20, 1724, for example, *The Spanish Fryar*, quite unassisted, took in only £12 10s.; on the following day, *The False Friend*, coupled with *The Necromancer*, one of Rich's most popular pantomimes, brought in £92 11s. A week later a revival of *The Prophetess*, a musical with dances and new scenes, machines, and decorations, raised the receipts to £164 1s. 6d. It was repeated for five successive evenings with the intake held to more than £100.

Rich was clever enough to pay his musicians and composers adequately. For the "Musick," as it was called on the books, he paid the orchestra £3 14s. 2d. nightly (more or less) making a total of £610 for the season. Although an occasional extra for kettle drums or harpsichords appeared separately, the charge for the music represented payments to a band that offered a First, Second, and Third number before the play opened and accompanied the entr'acte singing and dancing as well as the musical productions. Just how many musicians comprised the orchestra

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed study of this aspect of the eighteenth-century theatre see Donald J. Rulfs, "Entr'acte Entertainment at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, 1750-1770," *Theatre Annual*, 1954, pp. 17-27.

is not stated, but earlier in the century a similar nightly remuneration provided about 20 pieces.

Some individuals, like Dr. Pepusch and John Galliard, were paid for writing music, copying scores, and assisting in other ways beyond their normal duties as instrumentalists. Galliard received £15 15s. for writing the music of *Harlequin Dr. Faustus*, one of Rich's more spectacular pantomimes.

All told, the musicians and composers earned about £715, a sum greater than that paid the singers, but less than that expended on dancers.

In addition to these performers, Lincoln's Inn Fields had a host of employees whose duties, though less dramatic, were necessary to the proper functioning of the house. There were the large number of men who arranged the seating of the audience. The business manager placed an officer, usually with assistants, at each entrance. There were five boxkeepers, two pit doorkeepers, two men at the slips, and one each in charge of the galleries. Their wages were not high: John Bewley, stage door, about £6 10s. apparently; James Warner, lobby door, £3 3s.; William Bewley, gallery keeper, £5 10s. They supplemented their income, however, with gratuities and group benefits. The pit doorkeepers would have a night for themselves or the gallery doorkeepers would have a communal benefit. Occasionally one of these men would turn actor to play a minor role. The books show that Randall, a pit doorkeeper, sometimes appeared as an eagle in the pantomime, *Jupiter and Europa*, thereby augmenting his income to £20 9s. 9d.

Needless to say, the theatre had a prompter. His name was Stede and he received 5s. 6d. daily (the wage paid a middle-rank actor). Stede raised his season's pay to £50 by an odd job or two. On September 25, 1724 there is an entry under his name for a guinea for "ye Expences of Reading a new Play." No doubt he read aloud to an assembled cast a play which would soon be put into rehearsal.

Other personnel included women dressers, under the direction of Mrs. Carter who distributed the daily group pay of 13s. 2d. and who also had charge of altering and repairing costumes. She was sometimes listed on the books as a mercer and submitted sew-

ing bills of about £47. There was a house tailor, Grainger, who charged the theatre £96 for materials and labor.

These are small sums in comparison with the cost of costumes and wardrobe upon which Mrs. Carter and Grainger had to work. As well as one can total the sums, which were often inadequately entered to denote the exact kind of material purchased, the theatre during the season paid out about £925, or nearly 10 per cent of its budget, to tradespeople for wardrobe purchases. Some of these entries are interestingly specific: September 23, 1724, 10 guineas for "an Indian Gown and Pettycoat" which was for Mrs. Bullock, the leading actress; October 2, 1724, 6 guineas for "a Suit of White Damask"; October 7, 1724, 3 guineas for two pair of "black Stockings" for Diggs and Mrs. Vincent; November 21, 1724, 12 guineas for a "Brocade Suit of Cloaths" for Mrs. Chambers, a leading singer; December 15, 1724, 6s. for a "pair of Morocco Shoes" for Duplessy, a dancer. On December 16, 1724, the treasurer paid for one of the most expensive items of the season—"a Brocade Mantua and Pettycoat Silver upon a Velvet Ground" costing £31 10s. The gentlemen were not slighted. On February 15, 1725, there is an entry of 15 guineas for "a Gown and Pettycoat Brocade used for Mr Quins Dioclesian Cloaths."

Rich's enthusiasm for pantomime necessitated many special costumes, such as the "Witches Cloaths" for *Harlequin a Sorcerer* costing £5 2s. 6½d. paid on January 26, 1725. The purchases were extensive and varied: lace (often "copper Lace"), gloves, stays, furs, hair, hose, shoes, hats, swords, and wigs. And this was not all. Dovey, in charge of supernumeraries, was paid various sums daily for items which included habits, such as 4 guineas for a "new Suite of Black Cloth" for Thomas Walker in October; dancing shoes in January, £3 12s.; "a Gold Shape and Fringe Gloves," 8 guineas in February.

Another major expense involved the preparation and upkeep of scenes and machines for Rich's pantomimes. A notice in the *Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post* of January 23, 1725 says of his production of *Harlequin a Sorcerer*, performed two nights previously, that it displayed "the boldest piece of machinery that

ever yet was seen upon the Stage." Rich paid Hervey, his principal scene painter, nearly £375 and Powell, his scenekeeper and carpenter, £700 for labor, materials, and incidentals; sums which add up to a considerable portion of the operational budget. These men worked partly on plays but, undoubtedly, most of their efforts were expended on both old and new pantomimes.

Lincoln's Inn Fields also spent a good deal upon repairs and upkeep. Some items recurred regularly: the £2 paid Dumont for tuning the harpsichord; 5s. daily to the charwomen; £20 to Ann Hilbourne for sweeping; £14 to Nowell for care of the lamps; £8 to Catherine Rogers for care of the candles. Many payments were entered for craftsmen or tradesmen who supplied materials or services: nearly £4 to Green for the removal of refuse and ashes; £26 5s. to Butcher, the tin man; £42 to Gibson, the glass man; £40 to Hopkins, the bricklayer; £17 to Hunt, the smith; £4 to Watt, the plasterer; £30 to Osmond, the plumber; £24 to Wilson, the appraiser; £14 and £25 respectively to Poutney and Verhuyck, stationers. Mrs. Hinton's bills for washing totalled nearly £10, and the widow of Cornwall was paid 13 guineas in full payment of her late husband's redecoration of the ceiling.

The most detailed items in this category deal with fire, a constant menace both to the management and spectators in a theatre using candles and lamps. For coping with a potential disaster, Buck was paid £15 18s. for 5 buckets and Harrison £26 6s. for "a Water Engine and other Augmentations." Although the theatre itself did not have a fire during the 1724-1725 season, a major blaze in February, 1725 at Lord Cardigan's house next to it caused a closedown for one night. In view of the expense incurred by this fire it is uncertain whether fire prevention or fire fighting was the greater cost to Rich at the time. In the interest of good public relations, Rich paid liberally the hordes of firefighters involved. There were many crews in action: the Sun Fire Office, Union, Sheaf of Arrows, Porcullis, Royal Exchange Assurance, St. Clement's Parish, and many assistants from neighboring firms, such as Red's Printing Office. To each crew Rich was wont to give 2 guineas and an individual anywhere from 2s. 6d. to 10s. 6d. In addition, he paid for an enormous number of drinks. These refreshments, beer, ale, and brandy, totalled £11 19s. 10d., two thirds as much as Rich paid for fire buckets that season.

Taxes were another recurrent item, usually paid annually or semi-annually. There was the one year's lamp tax, £1; a half-year window tax, 15s.; a half-year "poors Rate" (an assessment for relief of the poor); £2 1s. 8d.; a year's watchman, £1; and the yearly water rate, £3. One entry here has only a mild relation to theatrical activities—16s. paid on April 13, 1725 "To Mr Cunningham for  $\frac{1}{4}$  pt of a Horse in the Militia for the Year 1724 due Lady Day Last." If these records are relatively complete, taxation at the time was not a heavy burden to the theatre.

There were also many odds and ends to be paid. The vouchers show a payment of £15 14s. for the printing of 14,500 tickets that must have been chiefly for admission to boxes as only on special occasions were printed tickets used for other portions of the house. Advertising in the *Daily Post* and *Daily Courant* cost 4s. 6d. daily with an occasional insertion in the *Daily Journal* at 1s. Most expensive of all were the bills, sometimes called the "Great Bills," which were posted around London to advertise the plays. Their cost alone for the season ran to £150 and to post them billsetters received 9s. daily.

The selection and choice of plays cost Rich a tidy sum. As occasionally happened he had to pay out money for a play accepted but never produced. For example on January 5, 1725 he paid Mears, the bookseller, 10 guineas "in consideration of his Damage in Buying and Printing the Farce of Shephard Written and Sold by Mr Walker and Leigh but never acted." Another expense can easily be visualized: on May 26, 1725, there is a notation that says, "Spent at the Salutation Tavern with Mr Quinn and Mr Ryan at the Reading of a Comedy of Mr Welsteads," 1 guinea.

On gala nights, when the Prince and Princess of Wales came to the theatre to attend a performance, there were additional expenses. On February 5, 1725 their Highnesses received "Two Gilded Books" of the play which cost the management 2s. and that evening Rich ordered gratuities of 10s. 6d. to the royal footmen.

All in all, the theatre took in approximately £10,500 during this season, but it is uncertain whether it was able to meet its expenses. Lincoln's Inn Fields had had genuine difficulties in the

years preceding and had not fully recovered by 1724. The crux of the problem seems to have been Rich's deductions for himself. As proprietor he took £1 13s. 4d. nightly for his own gain which totalled about £275 for the season. He also drew a great many extras, often without specifying their nature. No doubt some of this money represented reimbursement for bills paid out of his pocket, but probably not all of the £210 he withdrew above his regular salary. His brother, Christopher, who assisted in the management, received 16s. 8d. daily for 67 evenings and 6s. 8d. for the 100 others. This tabulation was John's version of his brother's earnings to which he added £50. The two gained about £680 in such fashion, a practice which continued even when the books showed a technical deficit. In November 1724, two months after the opening, Rich was running behind financially and in mid-November he paid only part of the salaries due each Saturday. Toward the end of that month a profitable run of *The Prophetess* enabled him to reduce his arrears, and as the receipts increased he was able to settle some of the large accounts. Apparently money flowed in during January, February, and part of March but not enough to weather the benefits that started in March. The benefit season was always a problem for the business office. True the nightly charge was insured, but little more would come in and a debt already incurred could not be overcome nor would there be money available to meet new large expenses.

Toward the end of the 1724-1725 season the theatre cut expenses sharply but income slumped not only because of the benefit nights but also because of smaller attendance in the late spring. The end of the season's account book contains a statement, signed by John Rich and Thomas Wood, the treasurer, which signifies that the accounts had been settled. The statement shows a balance of £336 10s. 9d. due to the treasurer from John Rich. That sum is approximately £127 greater than the extra amount Rich had withdrawn from time to time. If one takes the total sum (£488) which Rich claimed both in salary and extras and sets it against the technical deficit, the theatre earned about £152 above expenses before payments to the proprietor. Obviously, this is an extremely narrow operational margin for a play-



house with a budget of approximately £10,700. It was not until the winter of 1727-1728, when the great success of *The Beggar's Opera* made "Gay rich and Rich gay," that the financial situation at Lincoln's Inn Fields materially improved.



**NOTE:** The following section containing the Dictionary  
may be removed for separate filing.



Dictionary  
of  
American Drama Critics  
1850-1910



*Albert E. Johnson and W. H. Crain, Jr.*

W.W.

Caricature of William Winter (1836 - 1917), courtesy of the  
Theatre Collection, New York Public Library. Satirist unknown.

# A DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN DRAMA CRITICS,

1850-1910

*compiled by*

ALBERT E. JOHNSON and W. H. CRAIN, Jr.

## INTRODUCTION

American drama critics and drama criticism have received short shrift from the chroniclers of our theatre. Histories of the drama, of individual and sectional theatres, and books on dramatists abound; but save for Montrose J. Moses and John Mason Brown's *The American Theatre as Seen by Its Critics* (1934), we possess no history or extensive study of our critics and their criticism. There have been a few theses and dissertations upon specific men like William Winter, James G. Huneker, Brander Matthews, and William Archer, but the academic emphasis has been upon such contemporaries as George Jean Nathan, Brooks Atkinson, Stark Young, and John Mason Brown. A notable exception is the master's thesis by John Rothman, assistant editor of the *New York Times Index*, written for the Department of English, New York University in 1949 entitled "The Origin and Development of Dramatic Criticism in the *New York Times*, 1851-1880," a most interesting and valuable record.<sup>1</sup>

The principal reason for the lacunae in our theatre history is the difficulty of ascertaining who the drama critics were prior to 1901. As for prior to 1850, with a few well-known exceptions, the search for them is a herculean, perhaps an impossible, task. Drama criticism as a regular or accepted department of American journalism may arbitrarily be said to have begun about mid-century; but it was not until the end of the Civil War, coinciding with William Winter's employment by the New York

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Lawrence R. Brown's MS Thesis at the University of Wisconsin (1949) should also be mentioned: "Frontier Dramatic Criticism, St. Louis, 1835-1839."

*Tribune* in 1865, that *reviewing* changed slowly to *criticism* and that the modern critic was born. One reason for the difficulty in locating names is that criticisms were almost never signed or initialled until the last years of the century or later, even magazines carrying a regular weekly or monthly column or department. There also appears to have been little distinction drawn between drama and music criticism, especially before 1880. Indeed, in numerous instances the critic would also review ballets, burlesques, concerts, spectacles, and variety shows, and perhaps even literary events as well. The term "critic" in obituary notices and various cyclopaedias may refer to any or all of these designations although, without a qualifying adjective they usually refer to his literary criticism.

Additionally, the formative and then the competitive nature of American journalism demanded that the journalist be a jack-of-all-trades rather than a specialist. We are told of the New York *Herald* that "it was never Mr. Bennett's plan to let anyone occupy with any permanency the place of dramatic and musical critic,"<sup>2</sup> and that the New York *Sun*

... liked specialists, but no man could expect to stick to his specialty. When Gustav Kobbé went on the *Sun* in March, 1880, it was for the general purpose of assisting William M. Laffan in dramatic criticism and Francis C. Bowman in musical criticism; but his first assignment was to go to Bellevue Hospital and investigate the reported mistreatment of smallpox patients—a job which he accepted like the good soldier that every *Sun* man is.<sup>3</sup>

Even when the name of a critic before 1910 has been established, there is often no further information to be found. Either he was a minor figure or the material concerning him pertains to his career outside of journalism. When his journalistic career is dealt with at length, his two or three years of drama criticism are frequently dismissed or merely mentioned. This may have been because his work was forgotten, considered inconsequential, or associated with the contemporary taint of all things theatrical. In the New York *Tribune*, for instance, the arts received excellent coverage save for the theatre, which Horace Greeley distrusted on moral grounds. It was not until

<sup>2</sup> Joseph I. C. Clarke, *My Life and Memories* (New York 1925), p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> Frank M. O'Brien, *The Story of the Sun* (New York 1918), p. 350.



1865, with the advent of William Winter whose critical aesthetic was based upon the ministry of beauty and the public welfare, that drama was as ably represented on the *Tribune* as music and art.<sup>4</sup>

Research on the drama critics of our earlier newspapers and magazines and a study of their criticism are necessary for a fully rounded history of the American theatre. The day by day accounts of newspaper critics in particular should afford us a more detailed and accurate picture than we now possess. In England the late James Agate recognized this principle when he wrote: "English dramatic criticism contains much of buried treasure which ought to be recovered."<sup>5</sup>

The following dictionary is an attempt to stimulate such research. Four years ago I began a systematic notation of forgotten critics who turned up in my reading of various journals, memoirs, and biographies by or about members of the profession. Eventually my investigation led to the histories of newspapers and the biographies and autobiographies of newspapermen. Usually the reference I found was little more than the mention of a name, which then had to be checked, if it could be checked at all, in various indices, dictionaries, and cyclopaedias. Slight as may be the information about many of the names, the present compilation adds more than 200 to the 22 cited by Moses and Brown for the 1850-1910 period. Almost two years ago W. H. Crain, Jr. joined me in this study and has contributed valuable material that I would not otherwise have discovered. But I must remain responsible for whatever errors, despite careful checking, have been committed.

Anyone contributing criticism on the American drama and theatre to the American press and living in this country at the time of contribution is considered an American critic. No distinction has been attempted between the terms "reviewer" and "critic," and in several instances it has been assumed that "drama editor" is almost synonymous with "drama critic." Only those critics are considered who were writing about drama in the period specified, insofar as exact dates can be determined. Although the murkiness of the record necessitates some exceptions,

<sup>4</sup> Harry W. Baehr, jr., *The New York Tribune Since the Civil War* (New York 1936), pp. 27, 227.

<sup>5</sup> James Agate, *The English Dramatic Critics* (London 1932), p. xi.

only those writers who devoted at least a year of their time to drama criticism are noted. Since there seems to be evidence that a number of men and women cited as "editorial writers" and "literary editors" also contributed drama articles, the one year indicated in various reference tools may sometimes be taken as a minimum.

An asterisk signifies doubt. In his speech defending drama critics against the attack of Dion Boucicault, William Winter cited some thirty names as "competent expositors and salutary helpers of dramatic art."<sup>6</sup> Since William Leggett, Fitz-James O'Brien, J. Ranken Towse, Stephen Fiske, and other well-established critics were included in the group, the inference is that they were all drama critics. However, the inclusion of Charles A. Dana and Henry E. Krehbiel, to mention but two instances, makes it apparent that Winter, perhaps to strengthen his side of the debate, was speaking in general terms. Both Dana and Krehbiel (the music critic of the *Tribune*) were "friends" of the theatre, but the evidence does not corroborate them as drama critics. Whenever Winter's and others' vague references cannot be substantiated, the names have been entered as doubtful until further research may affirm or deny their inclusion.

Historians and authors of but one or two books on various aspects of the theatre have not been entered: thus, the omission of Ireland, Durang, Kilby and Tompkins, Seilhamer, etc. In general, the comment for each entry is restricted to drama criticism and authorship, and only to unusual or significant accomplishments in other fields.

Many of the sources consulted will be found listed in *The Dictionary of North American Authors*. Also, more than fifty biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs were combed for material, some of which are quoted in various entries.

Albert E. Johnson

<sup>6</sup> William Winter, *The Press and the Stage*, an address delivered before the Goethe Society on January 28, 1889.

Mr. Johnson advises that this dictionary will be for him a continuing subject of research. The *Theatre Annual* hopes that its other readers will be stimulated by the work which has already been done to send in newly uncovered entries to the end that an enlarged and more comprehensive dictionary of American drama critics can be published in a future issue of the *Theatre Annual*. Some sections of the country, notably the West, have barely been touched upon here. However, since theatrical production occurred preponderantly in the industrial and metropolitan East, it is obvious that the identifiable eastern critics will always outnumber those in other areas of the country.

—*The Editors*

# DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN DRAMA CRITICS

1850 - 1910

## A

- ABBY, JOSEPH. Drama critic *New Orleans Daily States* in the 1880's. "ACORN," see Oakes, James.
- ALDEN, JOHN (1860-1934). Reporter, Washington correspondent, and drama editor *Brooklyn Times* (1882-1886). Ninth in direct descent from John Alden of the *Mayflower*.
- ALDRICH, MILDRED (1853-1928). Drama editor *Boston Nickell Magazine*; a magazine writer, feuilletonist; author several books; wrote essays on Salvini, E. H. Sothern, and Julia Marlowe for *Arena*.
- ALDRICH, RICHARD (1863-1937). Began journalistic career as reporter on *Providence Journal* (1885), soon promoted to its drama and music critic and editorial writer (to 1889). Principally known as longtime music critic *New York Times*.
- \*ALLEN, ALFRED (1866-1947). Editor *Dramatic Studies* for two years; on staff *New York Dramatic Mirror*; professor De Mille and Alberti schools and American Academy of Dramatic Arts; author of novels; plays: *Chivalry* (1901 *Town Topics* \$1,000 prize play); *Playmates*; with Richard Hovey, *The Cup of Victory*; and others.
- ANDERSON, WILLIAM. Drama critic *Philadelphia Dispatch* in the 1880's.
- ATWELL, EDWIN. Drama critic *New York Graphic* in the 1880's.

## B

- BAKER, TARKINGTON (1878-1942). Drama and literary editor *Indianapolis News* (1906-1912); an editor, author, theatrical producer, and *New York* director (1912-1914); connected with motion picture companies.
- BANKS, CHARLES EUGENE (1852-1932). Drama editor *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (1918); an author, editor, and publisher; plays: *The Swami and Vibration* (1909), both produced.
- BARRON, ELWYN ALFRED (1855-1929). Drama critic and editorial writer *Chicago Inter-Ocean* (1879-1897); wrote novels and many plays.
- BARTLETT, WILLARD (1846-1925). Drama critic *New York Sun* (1871-1873), subsequently contributing editorial articles on legal topics and book reviews to it. Great praise for his editorial writings, called the peer of his contemporaries, "the master of most of them and the teacher of all of them, and of hundreds who have come after." Law partner of Elihu Root; later Chief Justice of *New York State Court of Appeals*.
- BASSFORD, HOMER S. (1870-1938). Drama and music critic *St. Louis Republic* (1893-1903).
- "BATUK, AZAMET," see Thiéblin, Napoléon Léon.
- BEKKER, LEANDER J. DE (1872-1931). Drama and music critic *Chicago Carter's Magazine* (1897); editor and critic *Brooklyn Standard-Union* (1901-1906). Principally known as editor and publisher.
- BELL, MILLARY (1857-1903). Drama and music critic *New York Press*. A portrait painter, best known for his life-size portrait of Ada Rehan as Katherine.
- BENNETT, JAMES O'DONNELL (1870-1940). Journalist connected with Julia Marlowe's executive staff (1900-1902); drama editor *Chicago Record-Herald* (1902-1914).
- \*BERG, ALBERT ELLERY. On staff *New York Dramatic Mirror* in the 1890's; author *The Drama, Painting, Poetry, and Song, etc.* (1884). One of the earliest advocates of a history of the American drama and stage.
- BIGGERS, EARL DERR (1884-1933). Drama critic and humorous columnist *Boston Traveler* (1908-1911); a novelist and playwright.
- BLAKE, TIFFANY (1870-1930). Drama

- and music critic and editorial writer *Chicago Journal* (1900-1901).
- "BOHEMIAN," see Wilkins, Edward G. P.
- BONNER, GERALDINE (1870-1930). Drama critic *San Francisco Argonaut* (circa 1887-1901); wrote several plays.
- \*BOWERS, A. F. William Winter seems to infer he was drama critic sometime between 1860-1880.
- BOWMAN, FRANK. Drama critic *New York Sun* (dates unavailable, possibly during latter part of 19th century).
- BRAINERD, ERASTUS (1855-1922). Drama critic *Philadelphia Daily News* in the 1880's; editor in Philadelphia, Seattle, and San Francisco.
- "BREITMANN, HANS," see Leland, Charles Godfrey.
- BROWN, THOMAS ALLSTON (1836-1918). For ten years, drama editor *New York Clipper* "only recognized and reliable theatrical journal in America," as of 1870; author *History of the American Stage* (1870), *History of the New York Stage* (1903), *The Showmans' Guide* (1874). Called important early chronicler of the American stage. According to own account was agent for Cooper English Opera Troupe for two years; business manager for Isabella Cubas for one year; treasurer for Madigan's Circus; writer for Thayer and Robinson's Circus; agent for Tom King's and Dan Gardner's circuses; business manager for M. Blondin.
- BUCHANAN, THOMPSON (1877-1937). On staff *Louisville Courier-Journal* (1900-1902); drama critic *Louisville Herald* (1903); editor Goldwyn Pictures, Hollywood (1919); honorary Vice-President and life member Authors League of America; in later years wrote radio sketches; plays: *A Woman's Way* (produced 1909), *The Cub* (produced 1910), *The Bridal Path* (produced 1913), *The Castle Comedy*, *Judith Triumphant*, *Civilian Clothes*.
- BUCK, LILLIE WEST BROWN, see West, Lillie.
- BUMP, CHARLES WEATHERS (1872-1908). Drama critic and editor *Baltimore Sun* (1895-1901); news editor *Baltimore Evening News* (from 1901); author *London Plays of 1901*, taken from various articles in the *Evening News*.
- BURBANK, NAT. Drama critic *New Orleans Picayune* in the 1880's.
- BYRNE, CHARLES ALFRED (1848-1909). Founder and drama critic *Dramatic News* (1875), *Truth* (1879), *Dramatic Times* (1881), *Evening Standard* (1883), *Morning Journal* (1884); in collaboration with Arthur Wallack, wrote the play, *Coward Conscience*; translated number of plays by Hugo, Brieux, Sardou, etc.; wrote or adapted number of comic operas, such as *Princess Nicotine*, *The Bangdoolah of Swat*, etc.

C

- CANONGE, LOUIS PLACIDE (1822-1893). Drama critic *New Orleans L'Abeille* in the 1880's; a journalist and playwright.
- CAZAUAN, AUGUSTUS R. Drama critic *Brooklyn Eagle* presumably in the 1860's; for many years house dramatist and adapter of French plays for A. M. Palmer's Union Square Theatre; said to have been largely responsible for the reconstruction and remarkable success of Bronson Howard's *The Banker's Daughter*.
- CHAFFIN, LUCIEN GATES (1846-1927). Drama critic *New York Commercial Advertiser* in the 1880's (possibly 1884-1890); music editor *Buffalo Express* (1879-1883), *Commercial Advertiser* (1884-1890). Principally known as music editor and organist; the exhibitor of the great organ at Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.
- CHASE, FRANK EUGENE (1857-1920). Pseudonym: "The Man Who Laughs." Drama critic *Boston Courier* in the 1890's; author of several one-act comedies and mock trials and a three-act dra-

- ma of the Cuban War, *In the Trenches* (1898).
- CHISHOLM, [?]. Drama critic *Chicago Times* (circa 1863), for it was stated about this time that the "[post] was given to one of the Chisholm brothers, the one who was drowned in the experimental trip of a vessel built expressly to defy submersion."
- CLAPP, JR., HENRY (1814-1875). Pseudonym: "Figaro." Editor of short-lived weekly *New York Saturday Press* (1858-1860) begun in association with Edward Howland, William Winter its sub-editor (1859-1860). Clapp resuscitated it in new form and wrote about stage.
- CLAPP, HENRY AUSTIN (1841-1904). Drama and music critic *Boston Advertiser* in the 1880's and 1890's wrote for *Boston Herald*; an essayist, extensive lecturer on Shakespeare; wrote several articles for *Atlantic*; author *Reminiscences of a Dramatic Critic* (1902). E. P. Mitchell, the editor *New York Sun*, said he was "one of the best critics of the stage I have ever known anywhere."
- CLAPP, WILLIAM WARLAND (1826-1891). Managed father's paper, *Boston Saturday Evening Gazette* (1847-1865); editor *Boston Journal* (1865-1891); author *A Record of the Boston Stage*, compiled from his *Gazette* articles between 1865-1891; wrote or adapted several plays, notably *La Fiammina* (1857).
- CLARK, JR., WILLIAM J. Drama critic *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* in the 1880's.
- CLARKE, JOSEPH IGNATIUS CONSTANTINE (1846-1925). On staff *New York Herald* (from 1870), its drama critic (1877-1883); on staff *New York Morning Journal* (1883-1885); editor *Criterion* (1898-1900), "...a literary weekly of a type new to New York—broad in policy..." Returned to *Herald* (1903-1906); publicity agent Standard Oil Company (1906-1913); originated idea for Columbian Exposition (Chicago 1893); plays: *Lady Godiva* (produced in Pittsburgh 1902), *Hearts-ease* (of which worked out scenario with Charles Klein); dramatized Fothergill's novel, *The First Violin* for Richard Mansfield; Wallace's novel, *The Prince of India*; and *Don Quixote* for Henry Irving who emasculated it so that it proved rapid and was quickly dropped; adapted Coppée's *Les Jacobites* for Robert Tabor and Julia Marlowe calling it *For Bonnie Prince Charlie*.
- \*COCKERILL, JOHN. William Winter seems to infer he was a drama critic or writer on stage in the 1880's.
- COHEN, ALFRED J. (1861-1928). Pseudonym: "Alan Dale." Drama critic *New York Evening World* (1887-1895), *Journal* (1895-1913), *American* (1913-1921); wrote various articles on theatre for *Cosmopolitan* and *Ainsley's*; author *Familiar Chats with Queens of the Stage* (1890).
- COLBURN, ARTHUR. Drama critic *Boston Traveler* in the 1880's.
- COOK, JOEL (1842-1910). Drama critic *Philadelphia Public Ledger* in the 1880's, on its editorial staff (1865-1906); author of several books.
- COPELAND, CHARLES TOWNSEND (1860-1952). Famous professor of English at Harvard University. Drama critic *Boston Post* (1884 [?]-1892); essayist in *The Dramatic Year*, 1887-1888; author *Edwin Booth* (1901).
- CORBIN, JOHN (1870—). Assistant editor *Harper's Weekly* (1897-1900); on editorial staff *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1900-1902); drama critic *New York Times* (1902), *Sun* (1905-1907), *Times* (1917-1919); wrote articles for *Forum*, *Atlantic*, etc.; author novels, plays, and books on Shakespeare.
- COWARD, EDWARD FALES (1862-1933). Drama editor and critic *New York Sun, World*; special writer on *Theatre Magazine*; author of several plays and musicals. Perhaps best known as an amateur actor: in 57 years played some 212 roles.

"CRINKLE, NYM," see Wheeler, Andrew Carpenter.

CRUTTENDEN, W. M. Drama critic *Buffalo Evening News* in the 1880's.

D

"DALE, ALAN," see Cohen, Alfred J.

DALY, AUGUSTIN (1839-1899). Principally known as American theatre manager and dramatist. Began career as editorial writer and drama critic New York *Sunday Courier* (1860); drama critic New York *Express* (1864), *Sun* (1866), *Times* and *Weekly Citizen* (1867, some accounts give 1864 for *Times* assignment)—thus drama critic on five newspapers simultaneously. Toward close of 1867 began relinquishing posts with resignations completed by 1869. Plays: *Griffith Gaunt*, *Under the Gaslight*, *Horizon*, *Divorce*, etc.

DANDY, JOHN M. Drama and music critic Chicago *Saturday Herald* in the 1880's.

DARNTON, CHARLES (1869 or 1870-1950). Drama critic New York *Evening World* (1909-1931); upon *World's* suspension (1931) became screen writer in Hollywood. Ward Morehouse said that he was "a great big fat man who enjoyed himself when seeing musical plays."

DAVIES, ACTON (1870-1916). Reporter (1890-1893), then drama critic (from 1893), New York *Evening Sun*; contributed several articles on drama to *Ainsley's*; author *Maude Adams* (1901), novelized version of Sheldon's *Romance* (1913) and, with Nirdlinger, novelized version of Nirdlinger's play, *The First Lady in the Land*.

DAVIS, LEMUEL CLARK (1835-1904). Drama critic Philadelphia *Enquirer* in the 1880's, perhaps earlier, its editor (1869-1889); associate editor Philadelphia *Public Ledger* (1889-1893), then its editor (1893-1904); contributed many articles on drama to *Lippincott's*, *Atlantic*, *Galaxy*, etc.

Father of Richard Harding Davis. DEALY, DENNIS F. Drama critic Philadelphia *Daily Herald* in the 1880's.

DEALY, FRANK M. Drama critic Philadelphia *Mercury* in the 1880's.

DE FOE, FRANK M. (1869-1922). On staff and drama critic Chicago *Tribune* (1891-1899); drama critic New York *World* (from 1899); contributed monthly critical article to *Red Book Magazine* (1905-1913); edited *Belasco's Theatre Through Its Stage Door* (1919).

DE FONTAINE, FELIX GREGORY (1834-1896). Financial, then drama and art editor, New York *Herald* (early 1870's - 1896); edited *Birds of a Feather Flock Together*, book about E. H. Sothorn.

DIECK, HERMANN. Drama critic Philadelphia *German Democrat* in the 1880's.

DILLINGHAM, CHARLES BANCROFT (1854-1917). Drama critic New York *Evening Sun* (circa 1890). Principally known as theatre manager producing 200 plays, mostly musicals (from 1900); managed 50 prominent stars; with Howard Gould, built New York Globe Theatre (1900).

DITHMAR, EDWARD AUGUSTUS (1854-1917). Drama critic New York *Times* (1884-1901); contributed articles to *Forum*, *Book Buyer*, *Harper's Weekly*, etc.; author *Memories of Daly's Theatre* (1897), *John Drew* (1910).

DONAGHEY, FREDERICK (1865-1937). Drama, music, and literary critic Philadelphia *Public Ledger* (1902-1906); music critic Chicago *Tribune* (1915-1918), then its drama critic (1923-1930); plays: with M. Hough, *Louisiana Lou* (produced 1912); with Addison Burkhardt, *The Girl at the Gate* (1912).

DORSEY, J. Drama critic Chicago *Daily Telegram* in the 1880's.

DUNGLISON, J. ROBLEY. Drama critic Philadelphia *Sunday Republic* in the 1880's.

DYAR, C. A. Drama critic Boston *Globe* in the 1880's.

## E

EATON, WALTER PRICHARD (1878—). Famous professor of playwrighting at Yale University (1933-1947). Drama department New York *Tribune* (1902-1907); drama critic New York *Sun* (1907-1908), *American Magazine* (1909-1918); author *The American Stage of Today* (1908), *At the New Theatre and Others* (1910), *Plays and Players* (1916), *The Actor's Heritage* (1924), etc.

EDDY, JEROME H. Drama critic New York *Sunday Courier* in the 1880's.

EDGETT, EDWIN FRANCIS (1867-1946). Drama editor (1894-1899) and literary editor (1901-1938) *Boston Transcript*; on the publicity and literary staffs of David Belasco, John Craig, Henry Jewett, James Hackett (1901-1930); contributed about 70 articles to *Dictionary of American Biography* (1928-1936); commentator on books and authors NBC and CBS (1927-1937); co-author, with John Bouvé Clapp, *Players of the Present* (1901) and *Plays of the Present* (1902); editor, *Edward Loomis Davenport* (1901).

EDMUNDS, R. or EDMUNDS, RALPH. An R. Edmunds was drama critic New Orleans *Daily News* in the 1880's; a Ralph Edmunds, called merely a feuilletonist, wrote essay on Georgia Cayvan for McKay and Wingate, *Famous American Actors of Today* (1896).

EWER, FERDINAND CARTWRIGHT, THE REVEREND (1826-1883). "... a noted Episcopalian ritualist, who in early life had been a dramatic critic,—one of competent intelligence, good judgment, and considerate candor." He performed funeral service for Julia Dean. Reporter, then editor, San Francisco *Pacific News* (from circa 1849), one of the first dailies published west of the Rocky Mountains; editor and part proprietor Sacramento (Calif.) *Transcript*; established (1854), with William H. J. Brooks, *The Pioneer*, the first monthly maga-

zine published on the Pacific Coast.

## F

\*FAIRBANKS, CHARLES. William Winter cites a Charles Fairbanks as "stage advocate" during Winter's youth. He must mean Charles Bullard Fairbanks (1827-1859) believed to be author of book of travel sketches and essays, *My Unknown Chum "Aguecheek,"* rather than Charles H. Fairbanks, reporter New York *Sun* in the 1880's and its night editor (circa 1890-1893). If either or both were drama critics John Rothman states that neither was so employed by the New York *Times*.

"FALCONBRIDGE," see Kelly, Jonathan Falconbridge.

FIELD, EUGENE (1850-1895). Worked on St. Louis and St. Joseph papers; managing editor Kansas City *Times*, and later (1881-1883) managing editor Denver *Tribune*. "In 1883 Melville E. Stone brought him to the Chicago *Daily News* as a special writer, and he began his famous 'Sharps and Flats' column," which consisted chiefly of "paragraphs on politics, personalities of the day, and the local drama. Later verses were included. . ." His biographer, Slason Thompson, states that "At the very outset of his newspaper career, Field's inclinations led him to the society of the green-room. Of western critics and reviewers he was the first favorite among dramatic people. . . Though in no sense an analyst, he was an amusing reviewer and great advertiser." Principally known as newspaperman, author, and poet.

FIELD, KATE (1838-1896). Full name: Mary Katherine Keemle Field. A journalist, author, lecturer, and actress rather than drama critic in usual sense; author *Adelaide Ristori* (1867), *Charles Albert Fechter* (1882); wrote comedy, *Mad on Purpose* (1868). "FIGARO," see Clapp, jr., Henry.



FISKE, HARRISON GREY (1861-1942). Editorial writer and drama critic *Jersey City Argus*, later on *New York Star*; contributed to *New York Dramatic Mirror* (1879), shortly becoming a stockholder, its drama editor and critic; manager of Mrs. Fiske, Otis Skinner, George Arliss, etc.; directed more than 75 plays.

FISKE, STEPHEN RYDER (1840-1916). Drama critic *New York Herald* (1862-1866); drama editor and critic *New York Spirit of the Times* (1880's-1916); one of the founders of *New York Dramatic Mirror* (1879). Called one of the ablest critics of his time. Managed St. James Theatre and Royal English Opera Company in London; assumed management of New York Fifth Avenue Theatre (1877-1879); introduced Mary Anderson, Mme. Modjeska to New York audiences; author *English Portraits, by an American* (1869), *Off-Hand Portraits of Prominent New Yorkers* (1884); *Corporal Cartouche*, best known of his several plays; produced own version of Sardou's *Rabagas* (1873).

FITZGERALD, RITER. Drama critic *Philadelphia Sunday Item* in the 1880's.

FLEISCHMAN, SIMON. Drama critic *Buffalo Courier* in the 1880's.

FLEMING, F. MAYBURY. Drama critic *New York Mail and Express* in the 1880's.

FLETCHER, DAVID D. Drama critic *Boston Commercial* in the 1880's.

\*FOORD, JOHN. William Winter seems to infer that he was a drama critic; editor *New York Times* (from 1876).

FORD, JAMES LAUREN (1854-1928). Made debut as New York drama critic (1879); for few seasons in 1880's was press agent for the Thalia, famous New York German theatre; during early years of Hearst's ownership worked on *New York Journal*; worked on and wrote for *Puck*, *Truth*, *Van-ity* latter part 19th century; contributed articles on theatre to *Harper's Weekly*, *Munsey's*, *McClure's*, *Lippincott's*, etc.; author

*Forty-Odd Years in the Literary Shop* (1921), a mine of miscellaneous information about the theatre; editor Mrs. Leslie Carter in *David Belasco's Du Barry* (1902).

FORMAN, ALLAN (1860-1914). Drama critic, starting on *Brooklyn Advance* (1881), then on various papers (1881-1885); established *New York Journalist* (1884), conducted it and acted as drama critic (1884-1908) except for three-years' travel abroad; contributed to *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Weekly*, etc.

FRY, WILLIAM HENRY (1815-1864). Essentially music critic and editorial writer. Beman Brockway, chief editorial writer next to Horace Greeley on *New York Tribune* (1853), states in his *Fifty Years in Journalism* that on the staff "... was William H. Fry, one of the best informed as well as one of the most caustic writers upon the paper. He looked after the theatres. . ." On following papers: *Philadelphia National Gazette* (1839), editor *Philadelphia Public Ledger* (1844), Paris-London correspondent *New York Tribune*, *Public Ledger*, etc. (1846-1852), editorial writer and music critic *Tribune* (1852). Distinguished as music composer: an overture performed by Philadelphia Philharmonic Society (1835) for which he was awarded a gold medal; an opera, *Leonora*, known as first publicly performed grand opera by an American, given successfully in both Philadelphia and New York (1844); second opera, *Notre Dame de Paris* (1863); and four symphonies.

FULLER, EDWARD (1860-1938). Drama critic *Boston Post* (1885-1891). Previously and subsequently editor, editorial writer, literary and associate editor of many newspapers; editor *The Dramatic Year*, 1887-1888; contributed to *Bookman*, *New England Magazine*, *Critic*, *Nation*, *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, etc.; plays: *Fetters*, *The Invaders*, *The Price of Silence*.

FILES, FRANKLIN (1847-1911). Drama critic New York *Sun* (1885-1903) subsequent to being its star reporter; author *The Theatre and Its People* (1900); plays: *Governor of Kentucky*, *Cumberland '61*, *A Ward of France*, *Drusa Wayne*, and, with David Belasco, *The Girl I Left Behind Me*.

## G

GALLAGHER, J. C. Drama critic New York *Daily News* in the 1880's.

GIBBONS, J. M. Drama critic Boston *Times* in the 1880's.

GILCHREST, WILLIAM F. Drama editor New York *Evening Telegram* in the 1890's.

GILDER, JEANNETTE LEONARD (1849-1916). Literary, then drama and music editor, New York *Herald* (1875-1880); with her brother, Joseph B. Gilder, started *The Critic*, later known as *Putnam's Magazine* (1881); plays: *Seven-oaks* for John T. Raymond, *A Wonderful Woman* for Rose Eytinge.

\*GILES, HENRY (1809-1882). William Winter mentions him as a "stage advocate." An Irish-born Unitarian clergyman, lecturer, essayist: author *Lectures and Essays* (1850), *Illustrations of Genius* (1854), *Human Life in Shakespeare* (1868).

GLOVER, LYMAN B. Drama critic Chicago *Herald* in the 1880's.

GOODALE, GEORGE P. Drama and music critic Detroit *Free Press* in the 1880's.

"GORDO, CERRO." see Kelley, Jonathan Falconbridge.

GORDON, ARCHIBALD D. (1848-1895). A newspaperman, playwright, drama critic in New York, with *Times* at his death; plays: *The Ugly Duckling* (not Mrs. Leslie Carter's success), *Is Marriage a Failure?*, *That Girl from Mexico*, etc. Although not likely, could this be Archie Gordon, the humorist, satirist, Bohemian, writer, and member of New York *Dramatic News* staff, mentioned by James L. Ford?

\*GUILD, CURTIS (1827-1911). Men-

tioned by William Winter as one of the "competent expositors and salutary helpers of dramatic art" and also as "stage advocate." Started newspaper career on Boston *Daily Journal*; on Boston *Daily Traveler* of which became proprietor before leaving (1858); founded and edited Boston *Commercial Bulletin* (1859-1898); merged the Boston *Evening Traveler*, *Daily Atlas*, *Daily Evening Telegraph*, and *Chronicle* into *Morning Traveler* and *Evening Traveler* (1857); a founder of The Bostonian Society of which he was president (1882-1907); president of the Club of Odd Volumes.

## H

\*HAGEN, THEODOR (1823-1871). William Winter refers to him as one of the "competent expositors and salutary helpers of dramatic art." Founded New York *Weekly Review*, musical journal exerting great influence on development of American music; author several novels and dramas.

HALE, PHILIP (1854-1934). Critic Boston *Journal* (circa 1891-1903); on Boston *Herald* (1903-1933), first music critic and eventually drama editor and critic. "His standing as a dramatic critic, although not so conspicuous and spectacular, was no less high than his authority as an expert on music."

HALL, ABRAHAM OAKLEY (1826-1898). Drama critic and literary editor weekly New York *Leader* in the 1870's; author various books; *The Crucible* (1858), one of his plays in which he himself played a part, his greatest claim to dramatic distinction. Principally known as mayor of New York during infamous Tweed regime.

HAMILTON, CLAYTON (1881-1946). Drama critic and associate editor *The Forum* (1907-1909); drama critic *The Bookman* (1910-1918), *Everybody's Magazine* (1911-1913), *Vogue* (1912-1920); author *Conversations on Contemporary*

- Drama, The Theory of the Theatre, Studies in Stagecraft*; playwright and collaborator with A. E. Thomas.
- HAMMOND, PERCY (1873-1936). Reporter, correspondent, editorial writer, drama critic *Chicago Evening Post* (1898-1908); drama critic *Chicago Tribune* (1908-1921), *New York Tribune* (1920), *Herald-Tribune* (1924-1936).
- HAPGOOD, HUTCHINS (1869-1944). Apparently in theatre department *New York Commercial Advertiser* (circa 1896-1897); autobiography, *A Victorian in the Modern World* (1939). Brother of Norman Hapgood.
- HAPGOOD, NORMAN (1868-1937). Drama critic *New York Commercial Advertiser* and *The Bookman* (1897-1902); editor *Harper's Weekly* (1913-1916), *Hearst's International Magazine* (1923-1925), *Collier's* (1903-1912); author *The Stage in America* (1901).
- HARRINGTON, J. A. Drama critic *New York Dispatch* in the 1880's.
- HATTON, FREDERIC (1879-1946). Drama critic *Chicago Evening Post* (from 1909); plays in collaboration with his wife, Fanny: *Years of Discretion* (1912), *Lombardi, Ltd.* (1917), *The Indestructible Wife* (1918), *Playthings* (1925), *Treat 'em Rough* (1926).
- HEYWOOD, J. C. Drama critic *New York Sun* (circa 1875-1877). In the opinion of E. P. Mitchell "Heywood's indolence was unique. He was capable of nigh anything and did as little as was humanly possible. His frequently employed formula in treating new productions was this: 'Such-and-Such by So-and-So was staged last evening at the This-or-That Theatre, but owing to the lateness of the hour a more extended notice is deferred to another occasion.' The other occasion rarely if ever arrived." However, of Heywood's actual ability Mitchell said that he wrote "what were the most important book reviews and literary appreciations that appeared in the *Sun* before Hazeltine's time."; collection of these *Sun* literary criticisms, *How They Strike Me, These Authors* (Philadelphia 1877); wrote several long poems.
- HOLCOMB, WILLARD. Drama editor *Washington Post* in the 1890's; plays: *Her Last Rehearsal*, *A Gilded Brick*, *Gringoire*, *The Street Singer*.
- HOLDEN, LUTHER LOUD. Drama critic in the 1890's; author books of travel.
- HOLMES, ROBERT. Drama critic a *New York weekly* in 1859.
- HORNBLOW, ARTHUR (1865-1942). On staff of *New York Dramatic Mirror* in the early 1890's; assistant reader for A. M. Palmer (1892-1894); on staff several newspapers; editor and critic *New York Theatre Magazine* (1901-1926); author *A History of the Theatre in America from Its Beginnings to the Present Time* (1919).
- HOUSE, EDWARD HOWARD (1836-1901). Part proprietor, associate editor, drama and music critic *Boston Courier* (1854-1858); drama and music critic, and special correspondent *New York Tribune* (from 1858); spent many years in Japan and wrote books about the country.
- "HOWARD," see Howard, jr., Joseph.
- HOWARD, BRONSON (1842-1908). Principally known as playwright; received first honorarium as drama critic under Charles H. Sweetzer, founder of *The Round Table*.
- HOWARD, JR., JOSEPH (1833-1908). Pseudonym: "Howard." Drama critic on a *New York weekly* and reporter *New York Tribune* (1859); called a feuilletonist and correspondent. Also said to have begun career on *New York Times* (1860); special writer for *New York Tribune*, *Herald*, *Sun*, *World*, *Recorder*, etc.; close friend of Augustin Daly and pallbearer at his funeral. If there were two men with almost identical names, there may be confusion here between Joseph Howard and Joseph Howard, jr.

- HOWE, GEORGE W. Drama critic New York *Evening Express* (1875). In *The Press and the Stage* William Winter mentions a "George W. Hows" but the "s" is probably a misprint.
- HOWELLS, WILLIAM DEAN (1837-1920). Wrote for *Atlantic* (1866-1881), became its editor (1872); conducted "The Editor's Study," *Harper's Magazine* (1886), and after temporary absence returned to conduct "The Editor's Easy Chair" until death; author numerous novels, articles on drama, one-act plays, etc.
- "HUMPHRIES, JACK," see Kelley, Jonathan Falconbridge.
- HUNEKER, JAMES GIBBONS (1860-1921). A drama, art, music critic (1887-1917); wrote page entitled "The Raconteur" for New York *Musical Courier* (1887-1902) which he himself called "a rag-bag, an olla-podrida page . . . of gossip, crazy fantasy, and whirling comment"; with London *Musical Courier* (1890-1895); engaged as music critic New York *Recorder* (1891-1895) and became friendly with Henry Neagle, the drama editor, for whose department, "The Promoter," did much of the writing; upon failure of *Recorder* became drama and music critic New York *Morning Advertiser* (1895-1897); wrote for *Criterion* (circa 1898-1900); drama critic New York *Sun* (1903-1917) having begun (1900) as music critic (some accounts would have Huneker and Fyles overlap as drama critics on *Sun*); music and drama critic various other periodicals; studied music and taught piano New York National Conservatory; wrote many books and essays on all arts: music, drama, painting, dance, sculpture, literature.
- HURLBURT, WILLIAM HENRY (1827 or 1828-1895). Also spelled "Hurlburt" and "Hurlbut." Joined *Putnam's Weekly* (1855) for several months; subsequently drama critic the *Albion*; joined New York *Times* (1857) apparently as editorial writer but may have written drama reviews; wrote for New York *World* (1862-1864), the *Commercial Advertiser* (1864-1867); returned to *World* (1883), became its editor-in-chief (1888-1895); not permanently with New York *Sun* but contributed news and editorial columns. Called a man of outstanding abilities.
- HURLBURT and HURLBUT, see Hurlbert, William Henry.
- HUTTON, LAURENCE (1843-1904). Drama critic New York *Mail* (from 1872); conducted department, "Literary Notes," *Harper's Magazine* (1886-1898); contributed to *Lippincott's*, *Harper's Weekly*, *Harper's Magazine*; author *Plays and Players* (1875), *Curiosities of the American Stage* (1891), *Edwin Booth* (1893); and, with J. B. Matthews, *Actors and Actresses of Great Britain and the United States* (1886).

## J

- JACKSON, THOMAS M. Drama critic Philadelphia *Sunday Transcript* in the 1880's.
- JAMES, HENRY (1843-1916). Contributed occasional articles on plays and players to *Atlantic*, *Century*, *Galaxy*, *Nation* (1875-1887); collection of his fugitive essays on drama from 1872-1901, *Scenic Art* (1948); principally known as novelist; wrote several unsuccessful plays.
- JENKS, F. H. Drama critic Boston *Transcript* in the 1880's.
- JENKS, GEORGE CHARLES (1850-1889). Came to New York (1895), drama critic for number of years.
- JENNINGS, JOHN JOSEPH (1853-1909). This seems to be the same "John Jennings, jr." drama and music critic St. Louis *Globe* in the 1880's. Drama editor St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* (1878-1886), New York *World* (1887); exposed Ignatius Donnelly Bacon-Shakespeare cipher; author *Theatrical and Circus Life* (1882); rewriter of several plays.
- JENNINGS, JR., JOHN, see Jennings, John Joseph.

JESSOP, GEORGE HENRY (d. 1915).

A newspaperman in San Francisco, drama critic on Modjeska's debut there, and responsible for her first American tour; contributed several articles on drama and other subjects, some with Brander Matthews, to *Century*, *Critic*, *Athenaeum*, *Harper's Magazine*, *Harper's Weekly*; plays: *Sam'l of Posen*, *A Gentleman from Nevada* (1879), *All at Sea* (1881), the comic opera, *Shamus O'Brien*, and, with Brander Matthews, *A Gold Mine*.

JOHNS, TREMENDERE. Drama critic San Francisco *Dramatic Chronicle* (founded 1865), its name changed to *Daily Morning Chronicle* (1868). A writer of frank, disarming, discerning criticism who "could be facetious, scathingly denunciatory or enthusiastically approbative when circumstances seemed to call for such a display."

"J. P. M.," see Wheeler, Andrew Carpenter.

## K

KELLEY, JONATHAN FALCONBRIDGE (1817-1854 or 1855). Pseudonyms: "Falconbridge," "Jack Humphries," "O. K.," "Cerro Gordo." With J. W. Taylor, established New York *Archer* "devoted to theatrical and musical criticism and intelligence" which failed; well paid for widely imitated sketches in New York *Spirit of the Times* (1845-1846); collection of articles, *The Humors of Falconbridge* (1856); author biography, *Dan Marble* (1851).

KLAUBER, ADOLPH (1869-1933). Reporter New York *Commercial Advertiser* (1900), *Tribune* (1901-1904), etc.; drama critic New York *Times* (1906-1914 or 1918); became theatrical producer with *Emperor Jones* (1920); in association with Jane Cowl, to whom he was married (1908), produced *Lilac Time*, *Smilin' Through*, *Romeo and Juliet*, etc.

KOBBE, GUSTAV (1857-1918). Assistant drama and music critic New York *Sun* (1880-1882); contrib-

uted articles on music, art, and drama to *Forum*; wrote drama articles for *Cosmopolitan*, *Harper's Weekly*; founder and editor *The Lotus*; author of books on operas, including Wagner's, and author *Famous Actors and Actresses and Their Homes* (1903); wrote several plays.

## L

LAFFAN, WILLIAM MACKAY (1848-1909). Drama and art critic New York *Sun* (circa 1877-1884), then its proprietor (1884-1909). "... always brilliant and sometimes caustic . . . one of the most distinguished dramatic critics that New York has seen. . . ." Largely through his efforts the *Evening Sun* established (1887); many other artistic interests.

LAMB DIN, A. C. Drama critic Philadelphia *Times* in the 1880's.

\*LANCASTER, ALBERT E. Record obscure, may have been on New York *Times* and may have been its critic; wrote for *Criterion* (late 1890's); plays: *All's Dross But Love* (1889), and, with Frank Vincent, *The Lady of Caenpore* (1891).

LATHROP, GEORGE PARSONS (1851-1898). Principally known as poet and author; librettist *The Scarlet Letter* (music by Walter Damrosch); editor Hawthorne's works; editor Boston *Courier* (1872-1879); assistant editor *Atlantic Monthly* (1875-1877); literary editor New York *Star* in the 1880's; contributed essays on theatre to *Harper's Magazine*, *Harper's Weekly*, *Century*, *North American*, etc.; 1890 Copyright Law substantially from his original draft; with Henry Edwards, dramatized Tennyson's *Elaine* (produced New York, Boston, Chicago).

LAWRENCE, EDWIN R. Drama and music critic Boston *Morning Express* in the 1880's.

"LEE, RODNEY," see Locke, Robinson.

\*LELAND, CHARLES GODFREY (1824-1903). Pseudonym: "Hans Breimann." Editorial writer and per-

haps drama critic New York *Times* (1858-1861); wrote on art for John Sartain's *Union Magazine* (from 1849); later assistant to Rufus Griswold on P. T. Barnum's New York *Illustrated News*; editor Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, *Vanity Fair*; for three years managing editor Philadelphia *Press*; editor Boston *Continental Monthly*, organ of Union cause, in which coined the term "emancipation" as substitute for "abolition"; first to establish industrial arts education; discovered "Shelta" language, famous lost language of Irish bards; author *Hans Breitmann's Ballads*, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, etc.

"LESLIE, AMY," see West, Lillie.

LESTER, WILLIAM R. Drama critic Philadelphia *Record* in the 1880's.

\*LLOYD, DAVID DEMAREST (1851-1889). William Winter seems to infer he was a critic by calling him one of the "competent expositors and salutary helpers of dramatic art," and one of the "workers for the newspaper press of America"; plays: *For Congress* (produced 1884), *The Woman Hater* and *The Dominic's Daughter* (1887), and, with Sydney Rosenfeld, *The Senator* (1890).

LOCKE, ROBINSON (1856-1920). Pseudonym: "Rodney Lee." Active in newspaper work in Toledo, Ohio (from 1873); upon death of his father (1883), the famous "Petroleum V. Nasby" and owner of the Toledo *Blade* for many years, assumed management of *Blade* becoming its president and drama critic in 1895. "Believed to have had as wide acquaintance with members of the dramatic world as any other person in the country." Made an exhaustive collection of theatre materials bequeathing them to the New York Public Library where they are known as "The Robinson Locke Collection of Dramatic Scrapbooks."

"LUNDT, DOROTHY," see Sutherland, Mrs. Evelyn Greenleaf.

\*LYMAN, HART (1851-1927). William Winter seems to infer he was a

critic; editorial staff New York *Tribune* (1876-1913), then its editor-in-chief (1905-1913); editor *Yale Literary Magazine*.

## M

MACKENZIE, ROBERT SHELTON (1809-1881). English correspondent New York *Evening Star* (1834); said to have been first paid European correspondent of any American newspaper; came to United States (1852) and for a while literary editor and political writer on a daily paper and music and drama critic on a Sunday paper; on establishment of Philadelphia *Press* became its literary and foreign editor and drama critic (1857-1877); author *Life of Charles Dickens* (1870), *Sir Walter Scott* (1871); edited *Brougham's Dramatic Works* (1856); probably most remembered for five-volume edition of the *Noctes Ambrosianae* (1854-1863).

MAGNER, JOHN F. (1855-1907). Drama editor St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* for several years (prior to 1893).

MAGNUS, JULIAN. Drama critic *Epoch*, a literary magazine, in the 1880's; contributed articles on drama to *North American*, *Century*, etc.; along with Maurice Barrymore and George M. Jessop frequented office of H. C. Bunner's *Puck* early in the 1880's; wrote at least two one-acters, both published (1880): *A Trumped Suit*, and, with H. C. Bunner, *A Bad Case*.

"MAN WHO LAUGHS, THE," see Chase, Frank Eugene.

MAPES, VICTOR (1870-1943). Pseudonyms: "Sidney Sharp," "Maveric Post." Served successively as Paris correspondent New York *Sun*, stage manager Frohman's Lyceum Theatre, drama critic New York *World*; general stage director New York Daly's Theatre; manager Boston Globe Theatre; director Chicago New Theatre; plays: in French, *La Comtesse de Lisne* (produced Paris 1895); *A Flower of Yeddo*, *The Tory's Guest* (both produced New York); *The Under-*

- current (1907); *Partners Three* (1909); and, with Winchell Smith, *The New Henrietta* (1913) and *The Boomerang* (1915); with William Collier, *The Hottentot* (1920); and several others; also a producer.
- MATTHEWS, JAMES BRANDER (1852-1929). Famous professor dramatic literature Columbia University (1900-1924); a founder Authors Club, Players Club, Dunlap Society; wrote numerous essays on theatre and drama; among books: *Development of the Drama, A Book About the Theatre, French Dramatists of the Nineteenth Century, Molière, Playwrights on Playmaking, Principles of Playmaking*; and, with A. H. Thorndike, *Shakespearean Studies*; with Laurence Hutton, *Actors and Actresses of Great Britain and the United States*.
- MAY, CHARLES F. Drama and music critic *Detroit Tribune* in the 1880's.
- MCCONNELL, GEORGE. Drama critic *Chicago Tribune* in the 1880's.
- MCKAY, FREDERIC EDWARD (1872-1944). Editor *Theatrical Tidings* in the 1890's; co-editor with Charles E. L. Wingate, *Famous American Actors of Today* (wrote the essay on Rose Coghlan).
- MCKENNA, JOHN J. Drama critic *Philadelphia Public Ledger* in the 1880's.
- MCLELLAN, CHARLES MORTON STEWART (1865-1916). Pseudonym: "Hugh Morton." Wrote theatrical column in *New York Town Topics* (circa 1890) which was "worth reading, though it stabbed someone in every sentence." The wittiest of writers, responsible for nicknaming William Winter "Weeping Willie" because of his "lachrymose propensities," also, perhaps, because of Winter's frequent funeral orations or tributes. Plays: *Judith Zaraine, Leah Keschna, The Pickpockets*; librettist *The Belle of New York* and *The Pink Lady*.
- M McNALLY, HUGH. Drama critic *Boston Journal* in the 1880's.
- M McNALLY, JOHN J. Drama critic *Boston Herald* in the 1880's.
- MCPHELM, EDWARD J. Drama critic and poet *Chicago Tribune* in the 1880's.
- MELTZER, CHARLES HENRY (1853-1936). Drama and music critic *New York Herald* (1888-1891); drama critic *New York World* (1893-1896), *Criterion* (circa 1898-1900); assistant secretary to Maurice Grau (1902) and Heinrich Conreid (1903); music critic and special writer *New York American*; author *A Course of Modern Plays; with a Brief History of What is Popularly Termed the Independent Theatre Movement* (1900); adapted Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment* as *Rodion the Student* in which Richard Mansfield starred; also adapted Dumas' *Collier de la Reine*, Hauptmann's *Hannele* and *The Sunken Bell*, Sardou's *Madame Sans-Gêne*, Imre Madách's *Tragedy of Man*.
- "MERCUTIO," see Winter, William.
- MERRILL, WILLIAM BRADFORD (1861-1928). Drama and Sunday editor *Philadelphia North American* (1881-1885); managing editor *Philadelphia Press* (1886-1891) for which continued as part-time drama critic; managing editor *New York Press* (1891-1895); later with *New York World* and *American* in managerial post; general manager Hearst newspapers (from 1917).
- MERRILL, W. J. Drama critic *Judge* in the 1880's.
- METCALFE, JAMES STETSON (1858-1927). Drama critic *Life* (1889-1920), its literary editor (1890-1895); wrote for *Criterion* (circa 1898-1900); managing editor *Cosmopolitan* (1895); art editor *Life* (1919); drama editor and critic *Wall Street Journal* (1923); editor *John Ames Mitchell; the Man Who is Responsible for "Life"* (1912); first president of First Nighters, an organization of critics and editors (formed 1925).
- MINER, HARRY. Drama critic *Cincinnati Times-Star* in the 1880's.
- MINTURN, MAURICE. Drama critic *New York Herald* in the 1880's.

- MITCHELL, HARRY. Drama critic New Orleans *City Item* in the 1880's.
- "MONSIEUR X," see Thiéblin, Napoléon Léon.
- MONTGOMERY, GEORGE EDGAR (circa 1858-1898). Drama critic New York *Times* (1877-1884); associate editor *Theatre* (1886); contributed articles on plays and actors to *Century*, *Cosmopolitan*, *American Magazine*, etc. and wrote several essays on theatre for *The Dramatic Year*, 1887-1888.
- MORFORD, HENRY (1823-1881). Drama critic on New York weekly (1859); established New Jersey *Standard* (1852-1854 or 1855); for a time on editorial staff New York *Atlas*; established and edited Brooklyn *New Monthly Magazine* (1880-1881); author *John Jasper's Secret* (a sequel to Dickens' *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*), *Shoulder Straps*, *Music of the Spheres* (pamphlet of poems).
- MORRIS, ROBERT G. Drama critic New York *Evening Telegram* in the 1880's.
- "MORTON, HUGH," see McLellan, Charles Morton Stewart.
- MOSES, MONTROSE JONAS (1878-1934). Drama critic *The Reader's Magazine* (1903-1907), *The Independent* and *Book News Monthly* (1908-1918), Minneapolis *The Bellman* (1910-1919); editor memorial edition *The Plays of Clyde Fitch* and several anthologies of drama; author *Famous Actor-Families in America*, *Henrik Ibsen*, *The Fabulous Forrest*; with John Mason Brown, *The American Theatre as Seen by Its Critics*; with Virginia Gerson, *Clyde Fitch and His Letters*.
- "MOWBRAY, J. P.," see Wheeler, Andrew Carpenter.
- MULLEN, H. A. Drama critic Philadelphia *Sunday World* in the 1880's.
- (1914-1923); founder and editor, with Mencken, *American Mercury* (1924-1925), then its drama critic (1924-1930); co-editor and founder with Dreiser, Cabell, O'Neill, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Boyd, *The American Spectator* (1932); authority on American Theatre for *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and *Britannica Book of the Year* (from 1935); from time to time drama critic on *Puck*, *Judge*, *Life*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, *Theatre Arts*, *Esquire*, *Newsweek*; author *The Critic and the Drama*, *Materia Critica*, *Encyclopaedia of the Theatre*, *The Theatre Year Book* (for various years), *The Theatre of the Fifties*. Noted for his high, strict standards, considered for the past 50 years America's most brilliant drama critic and now (1955) called the dean of New York critics.
- NEAGLE, HENRY. Drama editor New York *Recorder* (1891-1895).
- \*NEILL, HENRY. William Winter seems to infer he was a drama critic (circa 1860-1880).
- NICHOLSON, [?]. According to *The Life of Augustin Daly* was drama critic on "great daily" (1859), one of the "most prominent" critics of the time.
- NIRDLINGER, CHARLES FREDERIC (1862-1940). Contributed to *Criterion* (circa 1898-1900) and *Town Topics* (circa 1900); wrote many articles on theatre in *Illustrated American* in the 1890's; edited second volume *Gallery of Players from the Illustrated American* (1894); author *Masques and Mummings* (1899) which seems to foreshadow critical faculty of his nephew, George Jean Nathan; wrote the play, *The First Lady in the Land*; or, *When Dolly Todd Took Boarders* (circa 1912).

## N

- NATHAN, GEORGE JEAN (1882—). Began drama criticism on staff New York *Herald* (1905); drama critic *Smart Set* (1908-1923), then its co-editor with H. L. Mencken

## O

- OAKES, JAMES. Pseudonym: "Acorn." May have been connected with New York *Times*. Close friend of Edwin Forrest and, according to Alger's biography of Forrest, wrote criticisms of plays giving



them regularly to reporters; later contributed his articles to several leading journals in East and South.

O'BRIEN, FITZ-JAMES (circa 1828-1862). Contributed drama reviews to Clapp's *Saturday Press* (1858-1859); data seems to establish him or Charles C. B. Seymour as first drama critic *New York Times* (perhaps as early as 1855); literary assistant to Bateman, manager of Matilda Heron theatrical troupe; wrote several "bright little pieces" for Wallack's Theatre and six plays, his adaptation of *A Gentleman from Ireland* most successful.

"O.K.," see Kelley, Jonathan Falconbridge.

O'KELLY, J. J. Drama critic *New York Herald* (circa 1875); later a member of British House of Parliament.

## P

PARKER, HENRY TAYLOR (1867-1934). Drama critic (1903-1904), then music critic (1904-1905) *New York Globe*; drama and music critic *Boston Transcript* (1905-1934); author *Eight Notes* (1922), essays on music; made study of European theatres, opera houses, etc.

\*PATTERSON, ADA. Wrote article on Clyde Fitch for *Theatre*; author *Maude Adams* (1907) and, with Robert Edeson, the play, *Love's Lightening* (produced 1918).

"PERSONNE," see Wilkins, Edward G. P.

PHILLIPS, MORRIS (1834-1904). According to *The Life of Augustin Daly* was drama critic on an unnamed *New York* weekly (1859); principally known for association with N. P. Willis as associate editor *New York Home Journal* (1854-1867), becoming its chief editor and sole proprietor (1867).

PHISTER, MONTGOMERY. Drama critic Cincinnati *Commercial Gazette* in the 1880's.

POLLOCK, CHANNING (1880-1946). Drama critic *Washington Post* (1898), *Washington Times* (1889-1900); regular drama critic, suc-

cessively, *Ainslee's*, *Smart Set*, *Green Book* (1905-1919); founder and publisher *The Show* (1904-1906); general press representative for William A. Brady (1900-1904), for the Shuberts (1904-1906); author *The Footlights Fore and Aft*; plays: *The Red Window*, *The Beauty Shop*, *My Best Girl*, *Hell*, *A Perfect Lady*, *Such a Little Queen*, *Ziegfeld Follies* of 1915 (several of these with Renold Wolf), *The Crowded Hour* (with Edgar Selwyn), *Ziegfeld Follies* of 1921, *The Fool*, *The Enemy*.

"POST, MAVERIC," see Mapes, Victor.

POTTER, PAUL MEREDITH (1853-1921). Apparently drama critic *New York Herald* (1885-1887) on which foreign editor (1876-1883) and London correspondent (1883); on staff *Chicago Tribune* (from 1888); wrote and rewrote plays: his first success and in which Mrs. Leslie Carter starred, *The City Directory* (1889); *The Ugly Duckling* (1890); *Trilby*, *Under Two Flags*, *The Honor of the Family*, *The Girl from Rector's*, *Arsène Lupin*.

PRICE, WILLIAM THOMPSON (1845 or 1846-1920). Drama critic *Louisville Courier-Journal* (1875-1880), *New York Star* (1885-1886 or 1888); playreader for A. M. Palmer and Harrison Grey Fiske; founder (1901) and director American School of Playwriting; founder and editor monthly *American Playwright* (1912-1915); author *The Techniques of the Drama* (1892), *A Life of Charlotte Cushman* (1894), *The Analysis of Play Construction and Dramatic Principle* (1908).

PRIME-STEVENSON, EDWARD IRENAEUS, see Stevenson, Edward Irenaeus Prime.

## R

REAMER, LAWRENCE. Drama and music critic during much of time on *New York Sun* (1893-circa 1920). According to Ward Morehouse, he "wrote in a discursive and laborious style—a cultured man with a great deal of charm, who liked

- music better than he did the theatre" and, according to James G. Huneker, he "wrote with equal ease musical and dramatic criticism."
- \*REMACK, EDMUND ([?]-1868). William Winter seems to infer he was a drama critic or writer on the stage; connection with New York *Times* uncertain; only extant work is translation from German of Professor Hermann Zopff, *Practical Advice for Singers*.
- RICHARDSON, LEANDER PEASE (1856-1918). Editor *The Dramatic News* (1891-1896); on staff New York *Morning Telegraph* (1896-1900); editor New York *Inquirer*; adapter of French operettas and plays. Known as critic, editor, novelist, and playwright.
- "RIGOLO," see Thiéblin, Napoléon Léon.
- ROBERTSON, PETER (1847-1911). Drama critic San Francisco *Chronicle* (1881-1906), though began drama criticism in 1875; collection of sketches, *The Seedy Gentleman*; author series of articles "Great Actors in Old San Francisco" in magazine, *Pacific Monthly*. He "had the faculty of telling the truth without irritating, and was greatly esteemed by members of the dramatic profession whose fur he sometimes stroked the wrong way. . . . He was a great favorite among members of the Bohemian Club, who honored him by making him their president." Wrote plays and two librettos of comic operas.
- ROGERS, GEORGE. Drama critic Philadelphia *North American* in the 1880's.
- ROOT, ELIHU (1845-1937). Drama critic New York *Sun* (circa 1870-1874), specifically assistant drama editor to his law partner, Willard Bartlett, who preferred reviewing productions at Wallack's and performances of Edwin Booth leaving Root to criticize Lydia Thompson or George L. Fox in *Humpty Dumpty*.
- S
- SACHS, WILLY VON. Drama critic New York *Commercial Advertiser* (circa 1890); seems also to have been music critic.
- SANFORD, J. E. M. Drama critic Philadelphia *Evening Star* in the 1880's.
- SCHOOL, CHARLES E. Drama critic Philadelphia *Evening Star* in the 1880's.
- SCHRADER, FREDERICK FRANKLIN (1857-1943). Drama critic Washington *Post* (1901-1906), New York *Globe* (1908-1909); wrote for many other newspapers; editor New York *Dramatic Mirror* (1912-1916); on Belasco's literary staff (1906-1908); manager of theatres in Missouri; named the Friars' Club; besides several books wrote plays: *The Man from Texas*, *A Modern Lady Godiva*, *Hawkeye*, etc.
- SCHWAB (SWAB), FREDERICK (1844-1927). Career itself clouded. Supposedly drama and music critic New York *Times* (circa 1875-1890); member famous New York Lotus Club. In New York *Dramatic Mirror* (October 1875 and later) he is reviled as venal drama critic taking bribes for his reviews and serving as Adelaide Neilson's manager while reviewing her performances and reported to be on verge of marrying her. However, William Winter mentioned him complimentarily.
- SEADLEY, HENRY (1831-1899). Drama and literary critic New York *Times* (late 1860's and possibly early 1870's), later on New York *Evening Post* and *Commercial Advertiser*; author *Dangerfield's Rest*, *Marion Rooke*, etc.
- \*SEE, EDMOND. Referred to by George Jean Nathan as modern critic and successful playwright.
- SEWELL, JOHN B. Drama and music critic Buffalo *Daily Times* in the 1880's.
- SEYMOUR, CHARLES C. BAILEY (1829-1869). Drama and music critic New York *Times* (according to William Winter 1855-1869, other accounts give no dates); *Times* correspondent at Paris Exposition (1868); presumably on leave from *Times*, edited, with Theodor Hagen, New York *Weekly Review* (January-July 1865); wrote col-

- umn, "Dramatic Feuilletons," for Clapp's *Saturday Press* (1865); author "Pavement Sketches" and the play, *Wanted a Widow*. Data seem to prove that Seymour or O'Brien was first New York *Times* drama critic.
- "SHARP, SIDNEY," see Mapes, Victor.
- SHERWIN, LOUIS. According to Ward Morehouse, "did some excellent reviewing and writing for the old 'New York Globe,' one of the papers extinguished by Frank A. Munsey."
- SKINNER, CHARLES MONTGOMERY (1852-1907). Writer on Brooklyn *Times*, and later drama editor Brooklyn *Eagle* (no dates); author *American Myths and Legends* (2 vols.); wrote number of plays including *Villon, the Vagabond*; his brother, Otis Skinner, appeared in several of his plays.
- SMITH, HARRY BACHE (1860-1936). Principally known as librettist, book collector, and author. About 1882 hired by Melville E. Stone, editor and owner Chicago *Daily News*, as a "very efficient dramatic critic."
- STEINBERG, ALBERT. Drama and music critic New York *Herald* (circa 1890); was real force in musical world by latter 1880's.
- STEVENSON, EDWARD IRENAEUS PRIME (1868-1942). Drama and music critic *Harper's Weekly*; on staff New York *Independent*; author "Denman Thompson and our Rural Life Drama" in McKay and Wingate *Famous American Actors of Today* (1896); co-editor *Library of the World's Best Literature*. Principally known for musical criticism.
- STEWART, WILLIAM. Pseudonym: "Walsingham." Drama critic New York *Sun*; called the "first drama critic to adopt an intimate style."
- \*STOCKTON, JOHN DREAN. William Winter seems to infer he was a critic or writer on the stage. Brother of Frank R. Stockton.
- STRANG, LEWIS CLINTON (1869-1935). Assistant in drama department, then drama editor and critic, Boston *Journal* (1894-circa 1902); leading editorial writer and drama critic Washington *Times* (1904); author *Players and Plays of the Last Quarter Century* (1902), *Famous Actors of the Last Quarter Century* (1902), *Famous Actors of the Day in America* (Ser. 1, 1900; Ser. 2, 1902), *Famous Actresses of the Day in America* (Ser. 1, 1899; Ser. 2, 1902), *Celebrated Comedians of Light Opera and Musical Comedy in America* (1901).
- SULLIVAN, W. K. Drama critic Chicago *Journal* in the 1880's.
- SUTHERLAND, MRS. EVELYN GREENLEAF (1855-1908). Pseudonym: "Dorothy Lundt." Drama critic Boston *Commonwealth* and *Transcript* (1888-1896), Boston *Journal*. (1897-1898); author *Po' White Trash and Other One-Act Dramas* (1900); plays: *The Road to Yesterday* (1906), *Matt of Merry-mount* (1907); and, with Beulah Marie Dix, *A Rose o' Plymouth-Town* (produced 1902); with General Charles King, the four-act army drama, *Fort Frayne*; co-author *Mars' r Van*; and, with Booth Tarkington, adapted *Monsieur Beaucaire*.
- SUTLIFFE, ALBERT. Drama and literary critic San Francisco *Chronicle* before 1880 and perhaps into the 1880's; succeeded by Piercy Wilson.
- SWINTON, WILLIAM (1833-1892). On staff New York *Times* (from 1855) doing drama criticism occasionally; possessed mastery of French, French classical literature, and theatre; edited still well-known textbooks for history and philology courses.

T

- \*TAYLOR, DOUGLAS. Referred to by William Winter as "that able and genial theatrical recorder and antiquarian" (about 1860 and presumably still living early in the 1900's).
- \*TAYLOR, HOWARD P. Writer on New York *Dramatic Mirror* (circa 1884); wrote plays.
- \*THAXTER, ADAM WALLACE (1832-1864). William Winter seems to infer he was a critic or writer on

the stage; plays: *The Sculptor*, *Olympia*, *Mary Tudor*, *The Painter of Naples*, etc.; published *The Grotto Nymph*.

THAYER, A. L. Drama critic Cincinnati *Enquirer* in the 1880's.

THIERLIN, NAPOLEON LEON. Pseudonyms: "Monsieur X," "Azamet Batuk," "Rigolo." Although not specifically a drama critic was one of the New York *Sun*'s most distinguished critics and essayists who was said to be "a most versatile critic and reporter of the stage, the sports, music, art, and foreign politics"; wrote for London *Pall Mall Gazette*.

THOMAS, ALBERT ELLSWORTH (1872-1947). On staff, successively, New York *Tribune*, *Evening Post*, *Times*, *Sun*: according to George Jean Nathan he was a modern critic and successful playwright; plays: *Her Husband's Wife*, *The Rainbow*, *The Big Idea*, *Come Out of the Kitchen*, *Just Suppose*, *No More Ladies*, and, with George Middleton, *The Big Pond*.

THOMPSON, JOHN REUBEN (1823 or 1824-1873). Owner (1847-1853) and editor (1867-1873) *Southern Literary Messenger* which Poe had raised to national eminence in the 1830's; first literary editor New York *Evening Post* (1867 or 1868-1873) and its drama critic (1868-circa 1871) preceding William F. Williams; author *The Genius and Character of Edgar Allen Poe*.

THOMPSON, VANCE (1863-1925). Drama and literary critic New York *Commercial Advertiser* in the early 1890's; joined staff *Musical Courier* (after 1893); started *Mlle. New York* (1895), a bi-weekly "modelled after some of the Paris weeklies, audacious, fearing neither God nor man, nor the printer." James G. Huneker, member of small *Mlle.* staff, said that it introduced European writers and painters who since have become celebrated. Knut Ham-sun, Stanislaw Przybyszewski, Maeterlinck, Ibsen, Verlaine, Verhaeren, Edvard Munch, . . . Strindberg, . . . probably had their names printed for the first time in A-

merica in the pages of *Mlle. New York*. Rupert Hughes wrote his most brilliant short story for us. . . . Thompson also wrote for *Criterion* (latter 1890's); author of many literary works including several dramas.

TICKNOR, HOWARD MALCOM (1836-1905). Drama and music critic Boston *Daily Advertiser*, *Globe*, *Herald*, *Journal*, etc. (1878-1904); contributed essays to *The Dramatic Year*, 1887-1888.

TOWSE, JOHN RANKEN (1845-1927). Reporter New York *Evening Post* (1869), then its drama critic (1874-1927); contributed articles to *Century*, *Nation*, *The Dramatic Year*, 1887-1888; author *Sixty Years in [of] the Theatre*. Admired by James G. Huneker; William Winter's *Wallet of Time* dedicated to him.

"TRINCULO," see Wheeler, Andrew Carpenter.

TURNER, J. EDWARD. Drama and music critic in Detroit in the 1880's.

## V

VIVIAN, THOMAS JONDRIE (1858-1925). Assistant to Piercy Wilson, drama critic San Francisco *Daily Chronicle* (formerly *Dramatic Chronicle*) in the latter 1870's and early 1880's. He "was gifted with a vivid imagination, which enabled him to conceive the impossible and describe it as an actuality in a convincing manner. . . . He was an especially forceful dramatic critic, and had an astonishing familiarity with the literature of the stage."

## W

\*WALDRON, JAMES ALBERT (1852-1931). Managing editor *New York Dramatic Mirror* (1891-1910); editor *Judge* (1912); developed (1888-1889) "an analysis of the work of Shakespeare as a language creator, based on the historical values of the Murray dictionary and the kindred relations of Shakespeare's contemporaries; this work was endorsed as a 'discovery' by the late

- William J. Rolfe and other Shakespearean scholars." Author article on Salvini in McKay and Wingate, *Famous American Actors of Today* (1896); wrote a comedy, *Cupid and Co.* (produced 1909).
- "WALSINGHAM," see Stewart, William.
- WARREN, ARTHUR (1860-1924). On staff, then editor, *Boston Herald* (1888-1909); drama critic *New York Tribune* (1909-1912) succeeding William Winter.
- \*WEEKS, LYMAN HORACE. Principally known as historian and genealogist (1882-1916); contributed two essays to *The Dramatic Year*, 1887-1888.
- WEIMANN, JOHN. Drama critic *New York Staats-Zeitung* in the 1880's.
- WELCH, DESHLER (1854-1920). On staff *New York Tribune*; founder *Theatre Magazine*; prolific writer for newspapers and magazines for many years; publicity man and business manager for Augustin Daly (1887-1891).
- WEST, LILLIE (Mrs. Frank Howard Buck, Mrs. Henry Brown [1860-1939]). Pseudonym: "Amy Leslie." Drama critic *Chicago Daily News* (from 1889); opéra bouffe prima donna, the original Fiammetta in *La Mascotte*; author *Some Players*.
- WHEELER, ANDREW CARPENTER (1835-1903). Pseudonyms: "Nym Crinkle," "J. P. Mowbray," "J. P. M.," "Trinculo." Drama editor *New York Leader* (between 1865-1870); shortly thereafter drama editor *New York World*; drama critic *New York Sun* for two years; returned to *World*; wrote weekly column, "Nym Crinkle's Feuilleton," for *New York Dramatic Mirror* (1889); contributed to *Criterion* (latter 1880's). James G. Huneker called him an able writer, but "more brilliant than safe." Author *The Chronicles of Milwaukee* (1861), *The Iron Trail* (1876), *The Toltec Cup* (1890), *The Primrose Path of Dalliance* (1892), *A Journey to Nature* (1901), *The Making of a Country Home* (1901), *Tangled up in Beulah Land* (1902), *The Conquering of Kate* (1903).
- \*WHIPPLE, EDWIN PERCY (1819-1886). Winter refers to him as a "stage advocate." Principally known as literary critic, essayist, and lecturer during the era of the Lyceum movement; literary editor *Boston Daily Globe* (1872); author several books of literary criticism.
- WHITE, F. W. Drama critic *Denver Post*, presumably in latter 1890's and early 1900's; against the theatrical syndicate and barred from the A. L. Erlanger theatres.
- WHITE, RICHARD GRANT (1821-1885). Principally known as a literary and music critic and brilliant student of Shakespeare although occasionally referred to as drama critic; music critic *Morning Chronicle* and *New York Enquirer* (circa 1850-1859); contributed many essays, some on stage, to *Atlantic*, *Putnam's*, *Galaxy*; father of Stanford White, the famous architect.
- WHITE, THOMAS. Drama critic *New York Herald* in the latter 1890's and early 1900's.
- WHITNEY, CHARLES E. Drama critic *New Orleans Times-Democrat* in the 1880's.
- WILKIE, FRANC BANGS (1832-1892). Work included as oddity only. Became assistant writer on *Chicago Times* (1863) which was owned by the eccentric and eventually insane Wilbur F. Storey who was at odds with theatrical managers. In Wilkie's own words: "One of my first duties . . . was to attend McVicker's [theatre], under the guise of a critic, but with instructions to denounce everything irrespective of its merits. I failed to fill the bill, as I could not very enthusiastically condemn things which I saw to be meritorious."
- WILKINS, EDWARD G. P. ([?]-1861). Pseudonyms: "Bohemian," "Personne." Drama critic *New York World* (1859-1860); writings buried in files of *World*. *New York Herald*, *Saturday Press*, and *Leader*; wrote regular column, "Bo-

hemian Walks and Talks," for *Harper's Weekly* (1857-1858) and later one for *Saturday Press* using "Personne"; subsequently drama critic New York *World* according to one source, New York *Herald* according to another. Winter states that Wilkins was "first among American journalists to introduce into our press the French custom of the Dramatic Feuilleton," writing "in a facetious satirical vein, striving to lighten heavy or barren themes with playful banter, and to gild the dreariness of criticism with the glitter of wit." Said to be most famous critic of the day with possible exception of Andrew Carpenter Wheeler; plays: *My Wife's Mirror*, comedy in one act taken from the French and the first drama registered in New York for copyright in 1856; *Young New York*, produced by Laura Keane (1856); helped bring to American stage first version of Sardou's *Les Pattes des Mouches*, originally produced by Wallack as *Henriette* and later widely known as *A Scrap of Paper*.

WILLIAMS, WILLIAM F. Drama and music editor New York *Evening Post* (circa 1871-1874), but confined himself to music when Towse took over (1874 or 1875).

WILSON, PIERCY. Succeeded Albert Sutcliffe as drama critic San Francisco *Chronicle* (circa 1880), his assistant, Thomas J. Vivian. An English writer "with a taste for dramatic criticism, which he combined with a love of sport."

WINGATE, CHARLES EDGAR LOUIS (1861-1944). Drama and music critic Boston *Journal* in the 1880's, becoming its general manager (1898-1913); editor Boston *Sunday Post* (to 1941); author *Playgoers' Year Book* (1888), *Shakespeare's Heroines on the Stage* (1895), *Shakespeare's Heroes on the Stage* (1896); and co-editor with Frederic E. McKay, *Famous American Actors of Today* (1896).

WINTER, WILLIAM (1836-1917). Pseudonym: "Mercutio." Sub-editor Clapp's *Saturday Press* (1859-

1860); managing editor New York *Albion* for several years; drama critic New York *Tribune* (1865-1909); contributed articles on drama to *Harper's Weekly*, *Saturday Evening Post* (after 1909); author several books on stage and *The Life and Art of Edwin Booth*, *The Life and Art of Joseph Jefferson*, *The Life and Art of Richard Mansfield*, *The Life of David Belasco*, *The Stage Life of Mary Anderson*, *Shakespeare on the Stage*, *The Wallet of Time*, etc. The most influential American drama critic in last half of 19th century whom James G. Huneker called "the most poetic and erudite of critics. For years he wrote with unflagging vivacity English undefiled and musical to the ear. . ."

WOLF, RENNOLD (1872-1922). Drama critic New York *Morning Telegraph*, also called its drama editor and special writer (from 1900). Said that "in his reviewing he was cynical, humorous, and frequently bitter." Wrote film stories, scenarios, book and lyrics for musical productions, magazine stories; plays: *Ziegfeld Follies* of 1918 and 1919, *The Rainbow Girl* (1918), *The Beautiful One* (1919), *Heartsease* (musical version, 1919), and others, some in collaboration with Channing Pollock.

WOODS, GEORGE BRYANT (circa 1844-1871). Assistant editor Boston *Daily Advertiser* who won distinction "as a critic of literature and the theatre, as a special correspondent, as a raconteur of short stories, and as a writer of leaders upon nearly all current topics."

WOOLF, BENJAMIN EDWARD (1836-1901). Drama and music critic Boston *Gazette* in the 1880's; on staff *Globe* (1870); on editorial staff *Saturday Evening Gazette* (1871); music critic Boston *Herald* (circa 1892); author essay, "Ambitious Amateurs," in *The Dramatic Year*, 1887-1888. Although writing recognizable in drama criticism, principally known as music critic; wrote li-

bretto for Julius Eichberg's opera, *The Doctor of Alcantara*, and words and music for *Pounce and Co., or Capital vs. Labor* (1882); also wrote *The Mighty Dollar, Off to War*, and more than 60 other pieces popular in their day. Played with the Boston Museum Orchestra, conducted the Philadelphia Chestnut Street Theatre Orchestra (1864-1866), and held same position in New Orleans for brief period.

WYMAN, HENRY A. Drama critic *Boston Times* in the 1880's.

Y

YOUNG, JOHN RUSSELL (1840-1899). Drama critic, reporter, then managing editor, *Philadelphia Press* (circa 1862); managing editor *New York Tribune* (1866); appointed Librarian of Congress by McKinley (1897).

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THE  
THEATRE  
ANNUAL



THE THEATRE ANNUAL

# OTHELLO.

No. 2

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JAMES M. NIXON, ESQ.

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Title Page of the Edwin Forrest Promptbook for *Othello*

The title page is superimposed on an engraving from a daguerreotype of the actor that faces it.

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*1956*

(Volume XIV)



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of  
THE THEATRE

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# THE THEATRE ANNUAL

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## EDWIN FORREST'S OTHELLO

by

BARBARA ALDEN

"There has never been on the American stage such a powerfully, and at the same time symmetrically, developed man." So wrote a reporter in the Chicago *Daily Tribune* of December 13, 1872 in an obituary notice of Edwin Forrest (1806-1872), whose performance as Othello became the standard for American audiences of the mid-Nineteenth Century. Forrest's conception of the Moor was his own, painstakingly developed over many years and aided by certain unfortunate aspects of his personal life.

He made his New York debut as Othello at the Bowery Theatre at the age of twenty, and appeared in the role for the last time forty-four years later at the Academy of Music in Brooklyn. By 1860, he seems to have been satisfied enough with his interpretation to permit publication of his promptbook.<sup>1</sup> He was willing to commit himself to a more or less fixed form; one which can be studied in addition to the mere piecing together of random or sketchy remarks of biographers and of reviewers of isolated performances.

Forrest appeared in *Othello* at Niblo's Garden, New York, on October 29, 1860, and as this is the same year as the publication of the promptbook, we are safe in assuming that his performance on that night was typical of his final conception of the role. The day following the performance the critic of the New York *Herald* wrote:

Mr. Forrest's Othello is a strong, full, earnest performance, realizing the author's meaning according to the plain reading of the text. His points . . . in the fourth and fifth acts were made with so much artistic finish and subdued energy as to carry the audience with him against its own convictions. He makes Othello so generous, so noble, that we forget his absurd credulity.

<sup>1</sup> The title page of this promptbook appears as a frontispiece. This work will be referred to henceforth as Forrest's promptbook.

On these evenings, when the audience was carried away by Forrest's performance, they would not have been conscious that he was using many effects which at one time or another had been utilized by those actors who had played the role before him. Though his Othello followed closely the traditions and the conventions which had been established on the English stage pre-eminently by John Philip Kemble (1757-1823) and Edmund Kean (1787-1833),<sup>2</sup> his performance gave the impression of a unified whole, not one largely derived from the sum of a multitude of actions in the past.

A cursory examination of Forrest's promptbook will confirm his indebtedness. For example, he continued the omission of parts which tradition had regularly omitted; namely, the storm scene early in the second act, the Herald's proclamation, the sections in which the Clown and Bianca appear, the part in which Othello is tormented by Iago until he falls into a trance, and the pathetic scene between Desdemona and Emilia as Desdemona prepares for bed on her last night. Forrest also kept the convention of stabbing Desdemona with his dagger in order to hasten her death.<sup>3</sup>

Forrest was indebted to Kemble and Kean for particular practices, among which was his adoption of Kemble's presentation of Iago, "guarded," leaving the stage before Othello begins his final speech, and the words "Away with him" inserted to direct this change in action. He sometimes followed Kean by rushing onto the stage (II,iii) to stop the brawl at Cyprus "with cimeter [*sic*] in hand through the center gates shouting, 'Hold, for your lives.'"<sup>4</sup> Gabriel Harrison gives a similar description,<sup>5</sup> although there are other reports on Forrest's stage business in this scene. He also followed Kean, according to Mr. Sprague, by the bandaging of Cassio's leg with Desdemona's handkerchief (V,ii).<sup>6</sup>

It was Forrest's genius, however, which allowed him to adhere to tradition and to use the ideas of the tragedians who had preceded him and yet to keep an originality in his own creation.

<sup>2</sup> See George C. D. Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving* (New York 1920), II, 45, 127.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 33-35.

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Colby Sprague, *Shakespeare and the Actors* (Cambridge, Mass. 1944), pp. 185ff., particularly pp. 222, 192.

<sup>5</sup> Gabriel Harrison, *Edwin Forrest: The Actor and the Man* (Brooklyn, N. Y. 1889), p. 69.

<sup>6</sup> Sprague, *op. cit.*, pp. 208, 219.

This ability was recognized from the first. Mr. Odell remarked the "extraordinary prophetic" character of a review found in the *New York Mirror* of July 1, 1826, which said that

We perceive in Mr. F. something more than the mere student of elocution, servilely copying some favorite star of the day: it is evident that he looks to nature for models and to his own genius for instruction. . . . Mr. Forrest's acting has no decided resemblance to that of any performer whom we recollect.<sup>7</sup>

And a critic, in the *New York Literary Gazette and American Athenaeum* of November 11, 1826, remarked, after witnessing only the three last acts of Forrest's *Othello*, "The greatest praise we can award him is originality—he is an imitator of no actor we have ever seene [*sic*]."

In making a conscious attempt to understand the character of *Othello* as a consistent whole, Forrest used a complete First Folio of Shakespeare's plays of which he was the proud owner. In 1836 the *Albion* commenting on Forrest's performances in England, stressed their wholeness as if to rebuke Kean for his delinquencies in that respect.<sup>8</sup>

Details of Forrest's representation actually do show a great variance from Kean's interpretation. Both Kean's and Forrest's ability to make their public weep was part of the secret of their popularity, but while Kean's audiences sat impatiently through Acts I and II of *Othello* waiting for the real spectacle to begin, Forrest at once got the sympathy of his audience. His appearance was magnificent, in costume, in carriage, as well as in physique, and in the nobility of the nature he exhibited. In this he easily exceeded Kean whose slight stature and lack of any unusual brute strength left him at a decided disadvantage beside a man of Forrest's strong and muscular figure. Then, too, Kean lacked a certain inherent dignity which prevented him from assimilating the character of *Othello*. To this can be added Kean's misconception or his carelessness in the treatment of the first two acts which Forrest used to advantage for the improvement of his own opening acts. In the third scene of the second act Forrest succeeded in refining details to the point of giving greater stress than

<sup>7</sup> George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York 1927-1949), III, 197-198.

<sup>8</sup> See William Rounseville Alger, *Life of Edwin Forrest* (Philadelphia 1877), I, 307.

Kean had to restraint. Thus in 1836 the *New York Mirror* praised Forrest's "reprehension of the drunken brawlers" for its "striking and severe propriety." And apparently his eagerness to display Othello's forbearance helped him create in this act one of the few pieces of original business he is said to have introduced. A letter, reprinted in the *New York Mirror* of November 26, 1836, from the *Philadelphia Pennsylvanian* pointed out:

It is customary for the actor, when he gives the order to "silence that dreadful bell" (II,iii), to endeavour to outroar its brazen bangings, and shout as if he wished the bell-toller to have his *viva voce* orders. Mr. F. seized a passing attendant by the arm and, pointing to the spot, gave him directions in a subdued tone of voice, certainly more natural than roaring to increase the tumult which Othello is anxious to terminate. A loud round of applause testified the truth of this alteration.

It was in the last three acts that the distinctiveness of Forrest's interpretation was most clearly felt. Criticisms of Forrest's Act III repeatedly gave praise to the way he illustrated the growth of jealousy in the Moor in contrast to criticisms of Kean which stressed the "naturalness" of his displays of passion. The various stages of Othello's "growth" in jealousy had received Forrest's careful attention, line by line, and they were consciously and artfully managed by him. They were not unpremeditated, instantaneous achievements arising out of the heat of a creative imagination working in the very presence of an audience, as many of Kean's greatest effects seem to have been. They were the result of a careful study which never permitted Forrest to lose control of himself in the part.

Jealousy was aroused in Forrest's Othello more rapidly than in Kean's. According to Harrison, Forrest became suspicious at Iago's first words, "Hah! I like that not," as Cassio leaves Desdemona upon the entrance of Iago and Othello (III,iii). His Othello acted upon this insinuation in his speeches to Desdemona when she first pleads for Cassio:

Forrest acted as if he was somewhat displeased. [And] Desdemona still importuning Othello to give Cassio back his place, Forrest grew restless, and, in haste said, as if wishing to get rid of the subject:

"Pr'ythee, no more; let him come when he will;  
I will deny thee nothing."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Harrison, *op cit.*, pp. 84-85.

The promptbook is necessarily less graphic, but it seems to substantiate other descriptions of the violence of the jealousy of Forrest's Othello. When Othello refers to Cassio in the crucial line, "Is he not honest?" the promptbook shows him advancing toward Iago; then, when Othello accepts Iago's protestation of love, it directs both of them to go to the center of the stage, perhaps indicative of their harmonious agreement. Later it has Othello crossing continually from one side to the other which seems to indicate the commencement of his suffering through external signs of agitation.

Forrest was celebrated for "the burst of mixed passions" with which he uttered the sentence beginning, "If I do prove her haggard," and especially for the emphasis he put upon the statement,

I had rather be a toad,  
And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,  
Than keep a corner in the thing I love  
For others' uses (III,iii).

He was acclaimed, also, for his look of horror when contemplating Desdemona's appearance at the end of this speech.<sup>10</sup>

Though Forrest learned to deliver Othello's "Farewell" most effectively, it was not the pathos in his delivery that was singled out for praise, as in Kean's case, but his elocutionary skill. He had a remarkable voice. The obituary notice in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* stated that his voice

... was rich, deep, robust, and sonorous, and ... it possessed unexampled power. ... In the stormy lines of "Othello's" wrath, the power of his voice was almost ear-splitting. At other times, he could reduce his voice to a whisper, which was so clear and penetrating that every word was audible even in the most remote portions of the theatre.

With this voice as a tool he made a vigorous transition in this speech. After uttering "Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone!" in "mortal exhaustion," he turned on Iago shouting for the "ocular proof" of Desdemona's infidelity.<sup>11</sup> Such transitions furnished adequate ground to support with considerable

<sup>10</sup> See Alger, *op. cit.*, I, 306-309 for quotations from *Carlton Chronicle* and *London Albion* reviews of 1836.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 774-775; Sprague, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

firmness those who contended that Forrest's acting verged on the purely sensational and melodramatic. These excessive effects seem to give evidence of the self-conscious quality of Forrest's acting. It is very possible that it was this quality which prevented him from ever being able to free himself from artificialities, and to achieve the freedom and apparent spontaneity of action most admired in Kean's performance. The fact remains that while Kean was universally praised for his pathos, Forrest was more frequently praised for his startling transitions.

In spite of strands which might seem to accent purely the sensational, it is important to remember that the nobility of Forrest's Moor was an essential element of the effect he created. In order to maintain this element against the harshness of his treatment of Desdemona, he had not only to play down the pitableness of Desdemona by condensing her part, but also to bolster the sympathy of the audience for Othello. His interpretation noticeably subordinated other parts in the play and emphasized certain very definite characteristics of Othello. The performance was, evidently, throughout uniformly dignified. Forrest conceived a passionate character quickly aroused to violent expressions of jealousy, but aroused primarily through an intense feeling of personal honor which amounted almost to pride. Othello's conduct in the great death scene, consonant with his dignity, made of both the murder and suicide noble sacrifices of self.

In Act IV the individuality of Forrest's conception can be sensed. This act differs more than any other from the version found in the First Folio. Othello's severity to Desdemona, established as early as Act III, is emphasized and the irrevocableness of the impending catastrophe of Act V can be felt. The sympathy of the audience for Othello is played on, for

. . . contrary to the usual practice [Forrest] retained the scene in the fourth act in which the racked mind gives way and epilepsy supervenes.<sup>12</sup>

According to the promptbook it would seem that Forrest's general practice, like Edwin Booth's, was to omit the first scene of Act IV. It seems rather remarkable that he ever included it

<sup>12</sup> John Foster Kirk, "Shakespeare's Tragedies on the Stage, II," *Lippincott's Magazine*, June 1884, p. 606.

at all, even the brief section printed in the promptbook. Did he feel himself, or agree with William Watkiss Lloyd, who wrote:

When this scene, in which the fainting Othello appears as the suffering and passive instrument of Iago, is left out in representation, the best acting in the world, or to be in the world, will not preserve the scene in the bed-chamber from having, to well-ordered sympathies, all the shockingness of a contrived cold-blooded murder?<sup>13</sup>

The promptbook shows that it was Act IV in which Forrest began the process of subordinating Desdemona's part noticeably. Five lines were cut in the second scene in which she complains to Iago of Othello's ungentle treatment of her; twelve more lines were omitted where she bursts into tears as she denies Othello's accusations (these include some of Emilia's vehement defense of Desdemona); and four more were cut from the speech in which Desdemona shrinks from pronouncing the word "whore."<sup>14</sup> Forrest's omission of the whole third scene of this act deprived Desdemona of one of her best opportunities to gain the sympathy of the audience. This is in striking contrast to the later practices of Booth and Salvini.

Forrest used the more violent method of striking Desdemona with his hand. His promptbook reads: "Oth. (Crossing to L. and striking her.)" as he exclaims, "Devil!". It is noteworthy that Othello had to go out of his way to cross the stage before he struck Desdemona. Furthermore, Othello left the stage with Desdemona at the close of his speech to Lodovico almost as if to get rid of her he had had to chase her out of sight.<sup>15</sup>

Forrest's Act V, as was true in his Acts I and II, seems to have surpassed in many respects Kean's representation of the same portion of the tragedy. Alger states that Forrest

...seemed to fancy himself not so much revenging his personal wrong as vindicating himself and executing justice. He did not make a horror of killing, as Kean did.<sup>16</sup>

Harrison wrote that Forrest,

In the colloquial questions that followed between Desdemona and Othello previous to his smothering her, he showed no harshness, but acted more in

<sup>13</sup> William Watkiss Lloyd, "Critical Essay on Othello," *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. Samuel Weller Singer (London 1856), X, 172.

<sup>14</sup> Forrest's *Promptbook*, pp. 58ff.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>16</sup> Alger, *op. cit.*, II, 776.

the spirit of pity, and seemed to feel that there was no more alternative in her case than in that of Brutus when he sentenced his own son Titus to death.<sup>17</sup>

It is in consideration of this attitude that one omission of Forrest's promptbook seems to take on some individual significance. By omitting five lines which are part of Othello's conversation with Desdemona just before her death, Forrest threw together Desdemona's denial at Othello's reference to the handkerchief in Cassio's hand. She says:

He found it then;  
I never gave it him. Send for him hither;  
Let him confess a truth.  
[lines cut]  
He will not say so.

Might this not have made an equivocation, as if Desdemona had said, "Even if I did give him the handkerchief he won't admit it"? And thus Othello's "No; his mouth is stopp'd" could come like a stern denial of any further appeal which might only, in Othello's eyes have incriminated Desdemona further, expressing on Othello's part his unshakable conviction of his wife's guilt, and the necessity of her death.

Forrest apparently experimented for a long time with possible ways for Othello to die before deciding upon the printed version. In 1836 he was following Kean's example in attempting unsuccessfully to kiss Desdemona before his own death prevented him, but he did not fall backwards as did Kean.<sup>18</sup> Apparently, too, there was a stage when Forrest tried the effect of reaching Desdemona and kissing her before he fell, for Harrison wrote:

He stabbed himself with a Venetian dagger; staggered to the bed; fell upon one knee, and kissed Desdemona, as he said:

I kissed thee ere I killed thee:—No way but this,  
Killing myself to die upon a kiss.

and fell relaxed upon the stage.<sup>19</sup>

Evidently Forrest finally decided that the best way of closing the play was to die as quickly and unsensationally as possible,

<sup>17</sup> Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>18</sup> See *New York Mirror*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 96.



for William Winter approvingly stated that his Othello committed "suicide with one blow of the dagger, and the death was immediate."<sup>20</sup> Was this final conclusion responsible in part for the excellent review in the *New York Herald* of October 30, 1860, previously quoted in the initiation of this article?

His performance of Othello, as it appears to us, is even better than before. He makes the Moor less savage, less vindictive, and prolongs the struggle between his convictions and his love for the lady whom he has resolved to put away.

Trial and error, and finally success, seem to have produced for Forrest a crystallization not only of the best physical expression for his interpretation but also a crystallization of his conception of the whole character of Othello. Apparently he was not at first successful in infusing into his interpretation the profound feeling of tender love for which he later received repeated praise. The *New York Mirror* spoke of it as "new" in the issue of December 14, 1833. Pathos, too, was an effect which he had to learn.

"Ranting," however, was a criticism which followed him to the day of his death (an accusation to which he must have often pled guilty, and especially in plays other than Shakespeare's). As early as 1833 the *New York Mirror* betrayed the fact that Forrest was guilty of ranting at the same time that it marked his improvement in the title role, both by his having abandoned that fault, at least in the first two acts, and by expressing more satisfactorily the love Othello bore Desdemona. The review said:

In his recent performance of the part we were much struck by the tenderness and delicate ardour of his speech and bearing to Desdemona in the senate scene, and on meeting her at Cyprus. The speeches in this part of the play, which Mr. Forrest was formerly in the habit of giving with something of rant, were no [w?] uttered in a tone and manner of the utmost gentleness and affection.

To return to Forrest's ability to portray pathos. The critic of the *New York Literary Gazette and American Athenaeum*, already quoted, stressed the lack of pathos in Forrest's early performances. Yet, he felt that Forrest's delivery of the lines upon

20 William Winter, *Shakespeare on the Stage* (New York 1911), p. 266.

Emilia's knocking at the door after Desdemona has been smothered were "given in such a tender and grieving tone, and so far excelled all his previous efforts at the pathetic, that, we almost repent we said this is not Mr. Forrest's forte." Montrose J. Moses offers much the same criticisms; but even he, to whom Forrest generally appeared as "this Mastodon of the Drama, this Bowery B'hoy's Delight, this Ferocious Tragedian, who was fundamentally an emotional Melodramatist," acknowledged, by quoting the *Philadelphia Dispatch* of December 15, 1872, that "pathos. . . [Forrest] expressed touchingly in many cases, especially when his own bitter experiences had taught him to understand the special phase of grief."<sup>21</sup>

This reference to Forrest's "special phase of grief" had to do with the dissolution of his marriage. In 1837 Forrest had married Catharine Norton Sinclair (1817-1891), the actress. In time he believed that she had been unfaithful to him as Desdemona was thought by Othello to have been, and the marriage ended in a divorce trial (December 1851 to January 1852). It was believed that this unpleasant experience had given Forrest insight into the sufferings of a jealous man, thus aiding him in his interpretation of Othello's misery.

Forrest never freed himself completely from all artificiality and exaggeration, but with time, as his respect for his art subdued his vanity, and experience taught him to distinguish better between the artificial and the genuine, these faults were noticeably diminished. Alger, referring to Forrest's delivery of Othello's "Farewell" said:

He used, speaking it in a kind of musical recitative, to utter the words "neighing steed" in equine tones, imitate the shrillness of "the shrill trump," and give a deep boom to the phrase "spirit-stirring drum," and swell and rattle his voice to portray "the engines whose rude throats the immortal Jove's dread clamors counterfeit." He learned to see that however effective this might be as elocution, it was neither nature nor art, but an artificiality; and then he read the passage with consummate feeling and force, his voice broken with passionate emotion but not moulded to any pedantic cadences or flourishes.<sup>22</sup>

An early example of Forrest's exaggeration was the original "point" Forrest made which so impressed Kean when Forrest was

<sup>21</sup> Montrose J. Moses, *The Fabulous Forrest* (Boston 1929), pp. 337, 341.

<sup>22</sup> Alger, *op. cit.*, II, 649.

playing Iago to Kean's Othello during the winter of 1825-1826 in Albany, New York. Alger described this "point" as follows:

Iago, while working insidiously on the suspicions of Othello, says to him,—

Look to your wife, observe her well with Cassio;  
Wear your eye thus, not jealous,—nor secure.

All these words, except the last two, Forrest uttered in a frank easy fashion; but suddenly, as if the intensity of his under-knowledge of evil had automatically broken through the good-natured part he was playing on the surface and betrayed his secret in spite of his will, he spoke the words *nor secure* in a husky tone, sliding down from a high pitch and ending in a whispered horror.<sup>23</sup>

In spite of the sensation Forrest created by this vocal device, its naturalness can be questioned. The fault seems to have extended beyond delivery to include gesticulation. Kirk describes Forrest's admission to Emilia that he, Othello, has killed Desdemona thus:

'Twas I that did it?' with the exaggerated emphasis on the first word and the exaggerated prolongation of the second, accompanied by a vigorous thumping on the breast, like some barbarian chief boasting of his warlike exploits.<sup>24</sup>

In general, Edwin Forrest's mature performance of Othello can be described as improvements over the best that the past had produced — improvements especially in naturalness, evident both in his elocution and in his total conception of the part. The physical forcefulness of his presentations remained "equal to" that of his master, Kean, "in all his passionate scenes."<sup>25</sup> The conclusions, drawn from a cloud of witnesses to Forrest's elocution, seem to be that his speech was admirably clear; that it was far more natural than the speech of most actors of his day; and that his voice had an extraordinary emotional range, beauty, and power. His great fault, exaggeration, seems to have risen from two main causes: pride in mere displays of voice, and some real misconceptions concerning the suitableness of certain effects produced with it. But he was most remarkable in achiev-

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 140-145.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted by Lawrence Barrett in "Edwin Forrest," *Actors and Actresses of Great Britain and the United States*, eds. Brander Matthews and Laurence Hutton (Boston 1900), IV, 59.

<sup>25</sup> Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

ing natural expression at a time when naturalness was almost unknown upon the stage. In addition to this, Forrest was able to bring to his conception of Othello "a jealous man carried truthfully through all the degrees of his passion,"<sup>26</sup> in contradistinction to that of other actors who kept the human attributes subordinated or concealed completely. This quality of humanness in his acting led to the supreme success he was able to achieve as Othello, particularly after his own life's experience of jealousy.

<sup>26</sup> Alger, *op. cit.*, II, 777-778.

## THE CRITIC

by

WILLIAM HAWKINS

Forget for a moment what a Drama Critic actually is, and consider all the things he is expected to be.

It starts with the man who employs him, the editor of a newspaper. No editor does that very often, a fact apparent if you check the longevity of practicing critics. Occasionally one may be fired, but critics rarely quit. They have been known to outlive their editors. Most of them go on for a very long time.

What the editor is looking for, on this unusual occasion, is a man who is literate and quick. Of course, he must be observant, and if he is amusing, wonderful. If he can be docile, too, that is a vast virtue, because every newspaper has enough of a policy to dictate control over the erratic or abusive turns of phrases to which exhaustion or boredom may sometimes drive its reviewer.

But the Critic is not necessarily an expert on the theatre. No matter what the people who work in the theatre, or its maddened *aficionados*, may insist, it is not always advisable for him to be an expert. Consider what a tiny percentage of the readers of a big metropolitan paper have any technical interest in the theatre, or in the complex forces that make a play succeed or fail.

Essentially what the editor wants is a respectable reporter who can survive the monotony of a limited beat, and the inanely exaggerated intramural importance that is glared on his position.

So much for that. Just remember that the Critic is an ordinary writer with a tendency to become "stage struck," who, but for a quirk of time, might be covering baseball, astrology, or tropical fish for his paper.

What the newspaper intends to provide through its critic is a fair shopping service which will help its readers to decide where, or whether, to pay the often outlandish prices asked for theatrical attractions.

Then consider what the Critic is expected to be by that shopper who reads the paper. Circulations go from hundreds of thousands into the millions. What is the Average Reader, or even the more limited Average Reader Who Faithfully Reads Theatre Reviews? No man can tell. But of one thing you may be sure. The very fact that you are reading the *Theatre Annual* right now eliminates you from that group.

Most readers of New York newspapers\* read enough of each review to remark knowingly, "It's supposed to be good," or the opposite. Probe, and you'll find this reader is hopelessly over his head at trying to recall details. Furthermore, he indignantly resents looking like a poseur in a field in which he is quite as well informed as he wishes to be.

This is more than reasonable when you consider that the same comment, or its opposite, will suffice for ninety per cent of the theatregoers, even after they have seen the play.

So it becomes quite clear that the bulk of the Critic's readers are interested in a simple, blanket opinion which makes clear the subject of the show and its overall quality. They do not want their limited reading time cluttered up with complex or erudite explanations and comparisons.

Thus we take care of Criticism's manufacturer-salesman who is the Paper, and of its consumer who is the Reader. You might think that this covers the picture pretty well.

But it is not that simple.

Another fellow keeps looming over the horizon. He intrudes by nobody's wish but his own. He is recognized solely because of his loud, constant insistence that he has a right to an opinion. Of course, in a sense he does. He is the theatre professional, and things have come to such a pass that his very existence as part of the living legitimate stage is totally dependent on Criticism.

The cause of this frightening dependence is commercial competition from mechanized free entertainment. It has made the theatre a gamble of mad odds by which vast sums can be gained, and torrential losses experienced.

Such intoxicating doubts must effect the producer's mark-up. If he can have only one big hit or terrible failure, he might

\* Mr. Hawkins is the drama critic of the New York *World-Telegram and Sun*.—Editor's Note.

as well "hike the tab" to the top. And the customer, faced with astonishing monetary demands, looks around wildly for advice. And since the Critic is there for the sole purpose of warning him, he takes his word. Which is just why newspaper criticism so actively controls the theatre.

But to get back to the opinion which the professional man of the theatre expresses regarding Criticism. He persists in stating it under a blanket misconception which no amount of argument can dissolve. After years of writing, interviewing, being questioned, conversing, and lecturing, I have yet to find the individual in the theatre who can accept the basic fact that newspaper criticism is not, and never was, directed right at him personally. In his heart, he feels that every unneighborly opinion, every admonishment, every gentle query, is a public slap in his public face. You can say until you are purple that you write not for him, but for the fellow who pays a nickel for the day's journal. The professional will nod his head, and walk away looking numb, stricken by your obtuseness.

Although this persistent attitude is true of all branches of theatrical effort, it is, of course, exquisitely characteristic of the creator or artist who is more exposed, so more sensitive, than the businessman or promoter.

As the artist grows more mellow, he is less demanding of the Critic. But at the student age, he is terrifying. He expects the Critic to know all his theories, although he knows, or should know, that there are at least as many theories as there are teachers, and probably as many as there are students.

Even when the artist grows up, though, he is inclined to assume that newspaper criticism is a post-mortem for his special benefit, from which he should derive priceless and detailed constructive advice.

When one considers the scarcity of work in the theatre in proportion to the number of people who want it, and the insane odds against success even after one has got the job, this hypersensitive reaction to criticism is highly understandable. Yet you can see how it distends, in a remarkable manner, that mystic figure of What the Critic Is Supposed to Be.

Let us move on to the businessmen, the backers, to the pro-

ducer, and thus out of him to his spokesman—the press agent. This is the boy who more than anyone else epitomizes the process by which the Critic has been forced into his position of influence over the theatre. He is the “Master of the Quote.” Quotes seem to sell more tickets these days than any other single element of the theatre.

Now maybe the press agent can defend his seeming lack of imagination. Space is his criterion, even as it is more stringently that of the Critic. But his sense of triteness is fabulous. There might be any number of inviting, spicy, irresistible adjectives in a review, but if the P.A. can find “wonderful” anywhere, “Wonderful” it is in the ads. Now, after a critic has devoted a tremendous amount of concentration and energy into reducing a theatrical attraction to a few hundred finely chosen words, it is startling to read flagged at the world from the billboards that what he said was that the show was “Wonderful.”

Thus we reach an unavoidable conclusion that the Critic is expected to be all things to all men. And all men do not agree. The Critic is dazed, analyzed, confused, discussed, maligned, and fawned over. Is it any wonder that he is so often accused of cynicism? If he were not cynical, he would be a tangled mass of misconceptions, his good will diced and pulped.

There is a vague tradition among certain reviewers that they should never associate with people they might have to review in order to avoid personal prejudice. This has never troubled me. For years I have been writing hundreds, even thousands, of interviews which have kept me in close touch with the artists and their ideas. Being strictly objective is not necessarily being fair. If a bombshell like Ethel Merman acted Whistler's Mother effectively, as the reader of the review I would like to know that she is a bombshell offstage. It would inspire me to greater admiration and more excitement.

But there is one reason why on occasion I have refrained from associating with people working in the theatre more closely than I otherwise might have. This may or may not apply to other theatre reporters. There is no way of knowing. It is odd to work in such proximity to people whose whole lives are made up of wild hopes, terrible gambles, and vast courage, and then



sit in judgment on them as honestly as one can, when what one does demands no real hopes or gambles, and no courage whatever.

As a critic you cannot be wrong, you can only be eliminated. And you should be for being abusive, salacious, lazy, dishonest, or any number of other things. But your job is to give an opinion, and an opinion cannot be wrong.

The Critic must be careful not to be smug. Every once in a while someone brings up the question whether a critic should apply to an off-Broadway production standards different from those he employs for one on Broadway. Very often the reply is that there is only one set of artistic standards which must be applied wherever the Critic practices. I heartily disagree with this point of view, and cannot believe that it is often observed. Consider the disparity of physical resources, of experience, of time, and of discomfort, that are all involved. To say that you adhere to the same standards for judging *The Dog Beneath the Skin* at the Cherry Lane Theatre as you do for the Lunts in *The Great Sebastians* is like trying to pat a dachshund by lifting your arm at the same angle you would to pat a Percheron. You will look pretty silly.

Arguments about the uses of theatre criticism are endless. There is no end or fixity to the function. Nowadays it seems that more is written *about* the theatre than is written *for* it. And the quantity written about Criticism is appalling. One ends in an introspective spiral of alarming and dizzy refinement.

There are certain mechanical difficulties under which a newspaper critic works and which are not always obvious. The first one, long and deeply discussed by members of the profession, is that of time. The artist so often believes that with more time the Critic would have come to a different conclusion. The honest answer is that he almost never would. He might write better, be harsher or more gentle as the spirit moved him, express himself more vividly, or be clearer about his reasons, but the Critic, with very little training in the rigorous system of reviewing, can quickly arrive at a state where the snap judgment is the real and lasting one.

The only proof I can offer of this is that for years I have

gone back to see shows which puzzled me, or about which I disagreed with other critics or friends. Often the degree of my feeling has altered, but I have never reversed my conclusive mind. You might as well say you could write about a burning building better if you had more time. This is not the reporter's method.

Time has a counterpart control which is space. The average person, or even the average writer, sitting down to describe a play would be shocked to find how quickly he has used up the drama critic's allotment of syllables. When fighting to condense your thoughts and opinions you quickly realize that added time does little but complicate your problem.

Yet, with all these limitations, there is a temptation to include the obvious. There is a newspaper adage which states that a reporter must assume that his reader knows nothing at all about the immediate subject. But most people who read theatre reviews are not haphazard fellows. If the man is good for one review, he is usually good for nearly all of them. So it is safe to assume that he knows a play done in a Third Street cellar has not the quality of one done at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre on Broadway. Sometimes, at a loss for what there is really to say, the Critic carefully points out the distinction, almost by way of apology for what will follow. You would be surprised how often the Critic's greatest strain is to avoid being ungenerous.

This emphasis on the obvious is only one of many difficulties derived from the pressures of time and space. A pace is created which makes one aware of marshalling one's mental processes in advance of a New York opening. Nobody, writing in daily form about the theatre, studies out-of-town reviews, reports, or rumors. The reason is simple. His own chief stimulation is surprise, and almost his only great pride stems from the fact that he is one of those rarest of modern men, one who makes up his own mind.

However, there are inherent facts about any production which indicate in advance certain aspects of the overall reaction. This, of course, is particularly true of revivals. One recent one, done at the City Center, will serve admirably to illustrate what I have meant by awarding space to the obvious. It was the revival of *Streetcar* starring Tallulah Bankhead.

Look what the reviewer had on his hands. An admirable play

which had enjoyed a vast success; a role that he may well have already seen acted by half a dozen leading ladies. And this time a star, who was manifestly trick casting from the point of view of age, manner, and temperament, but most of all from the point of view of her own very vivid and exploitable personal life.

What a tremendous amount of space was devoted to pointing out all of this! It was interesting, relevant, and true, but perfectly obvious to any literate child of ten or over. Maybe fifteen. No one who had read papers, watched television, or heard radio in the past few years could miss knowing full well what an assertive, incisive dynamo Bankhead is. And very few could have failed to know just as well what *Streetcar* is all about.

We are all subject to mistakes, big ones, even the critics. How dull we would be if we weren't! Some of the mistakes get to be habits, and that is our fault. One of the greatest of these, I sometimes think, is a self-righteous refusal to be emotional in the interest of academic accuracy which is sounder for permanent records, and is also for the birds.

It is a terrible thing for a reporter to learn that what he writes is reprinted and stashed away in thousands of school libraries all over the country. It makes him self-conscious. The whole life stream of journalism is the focus of its force on the immediate. It is the best for NOW—in a moment, it is no longer news. You may say that this theory should not apply to theatre criticism. Perhaps not, but it is surely wrong for any reporter on a daily paper to wonder what he will sound like when someone "looks him up" ten years later. So, instead of a full-blown, heady appreciation, one sometimes finds a careful dissection of a play in a review. It is not what Mr. Average Reader would say, nor is it, I believe, what he wants to hear.

Every once in a while there is a play, imperfect in form, perhaps not even particularly sound in thought, yet so beautifully done, or so originally wrought, that one is lifted out of the humdrum commerce of the theatre and literally put to flight. If the theatre teaches us anything at all, it is that nothing is so precious as imagination. When we find it, in any little suddenly brightened corner of theatrical art, it must be cherished and fanned and pointed to and loved. If the Critic is suddenly engrossed in the

puritanical denial "I won't be caught dead being carried away," nothing will happen to that lovely spark.

In Manhattan we lack that flight in the sense that Chicago's Claudia Cassidy and London's Kenneth Tynan, for example, have it. They can be wildly wrong (who can't), but they are not afraid to make fools of themselves in the interest of letting their records become impassioned. This process has also, a good deal to do with a sense of humor. Not the smartness to see a joke, or the wit to make one, but the mellow vision to see things in proportion. Is it more important to take the pointer to the cracked spine of a story line, or to let oneself tremble shamelessly in print with those most wonderful words of all: "I laughed," or "I cried"? I can see very little choice.

Another mistake we critics make as a group is to indulge ourselves with a fashion, or a habit, concerning our seat location in the theatre audience. There was a time, apparently, when it was considered an honor to sit closer to the stage than any other critic. Nobody discusses this anymore. Yet most of us sit within a few feet of the proscenium. It happens to be easy for me to bring this up for my eyes will not adjust when I am close to the stage; sitting close and watching on the bias makes me seasick. I hate nervous distractions onstage. So for years I have sat behind the tenth row of any house. And what a difference! I watch a play woefully missing in the nuances, the delicate interchanges, the simultaneous balances which the words tell me ought to be there in the acting. And I say so in print. The next day I read of a performance rich with just those nuances, interchanges, and balances. So I try to puzzle it out, this conflict of observation which makes the other man sound very prejudiced, or me seem very inattentive, depending on which one of us is right. The only conclusion that makes any sense rests on the flat fact that the man who saw so much was eight or ten rows closer to the actors than I was. Now I do not say I am right, but I do say that what I saw was what more than ninety per cent of the audience saw, and that he saw what perhaps five per cent were able to see.

Any actor worth his salt, unless he is making his Broadway debut, knows where the critics are. I don't care what he denies.

He is very stupid if he does not key his performance to that neighboring bank of stalls where his judges are deposited. Whether he is wise and acute enough to do that and get away with it, and then change his tune on subsequent nights, I do not know. But I do know that if he is forced into this cute trick, and it works, he has been reviewed for the world at large on something quite different from what he will care to do again.

Critics can be terribly wrong, and nobody knows that better than they do. They can be wrong in two ways: in matters of real quality and in matters of commercial potential. As far as quality is concerned, the sometimes blinding element is the difficulty in distinguishing between what is slick, thus readily salable to the emotions, and what has deep-rooted integrity and is carefully polished. So often the pat plays work on you. You are disturbed by their deftness, and assume that they mean a great deal more than they actually do. But that is not a severe error, because if a play is neat enough to fool the jaded Critic, it is certainly going to fool, and impress, plenty of other people who watch it.

Commercial potential is trickier. A critic may watch a show which he knows can attract a lot of business, yet finds it so abhorrently tasteless that he cannot bring himself even to recognize its gold fillings in print. On the other hand, he can see a production which he knows will never make a dime (perhaps too special, misleadingly titled, mistakenly cast), yet know it for a fine work of genuine quality and feel it is worth his reputation to laud it in conscious futility. There is not much to say about such situations. Records show that critics like more shows than the public does. And to assume that even a small, conspicuous stratum of public opinion can eradicate bad taste is tantamount to saying that disapproval would annihilate the paramour.

Remember the Volstead Act?

## PERIAKTOI AT THE MEDICI COURT?

by

A. M. NAGLER

The marriage of the Archduchess Joanna of Austria to Duke Francesco de' Medici was solemnized at Christmas of 1565. In Tuscany this union of the Duke of Florence and Siena with a member of the House of Hapsburg was considered a political event of the first magnitude. For the occasion the Medici staged a series of sumptuous shows.<sup>1</sup>

One of the highlights of the festivities was the production of Francesco d'Ambra's *La cofanaria* intertwined with Giovanni Battista Cini's intermezzi on the subject of Apuleius' *Cupid and Psyche* for which Vasari designed the scenery.

The performance took place at the Palazzo Vecchio where Vasari erected the stage at the end of the great hall.<sup>2</sup> Twelve crown-shaped chandeliers were suspended from Vasari's painted ceiling throwing down light upon the 360 spectators. Along the walls there were six tiers of steps for the ladies. In the middle of the hall a dais had been erected for the members of the Houses of Hapsburg and Medici and the ambassadors and other guests of honor. For the gentlemen of lower rank benches had been set on the floor of the hall.

The stage floor was raised  $7\frac{3}{4}$  feet<sup>3</sup> above the floor of the

<sup>1</sup> The Duke appointed Giovanni Caccini his *Proveditore Generale della Festa*; Don Vincenzo Borghini supplied the ideas for the entertainments; the artistic execution lay in the hands of Giorgio Vasari and a host of collaborating artists. For Caccini and Borghini, see Hermann-Walther Frey, *Neue Briefe von Caccini* (Burg b. M. 1940), *passim*, and on Vasari's work, see Piero Ginori Conti, *L'Apparato per le nozze di Francesco de' Medici e di Giovanna d'Austria* (Firenze 1936).

The present account of the Florentine festival is based upon reports of two eyewitnesses whose names do not appear on the title pages of their descriptions. However, there is no doubt of the authorship of the two *descrizioni*: Domenico Mellini, *Descrizione dell' apparato della comedia et intermedii* . . . (Firenze 1566); Giovanni Battista Cini, *Descrizione dell' apparato fatto in Firenze* . . . included by Vasari in his *Lives* and reprinted in the Milanese edition of *Le Opere di Giorgio Vasari* (Firenze 1882), VIII, 517-617. Cini will be quoted here with page numbers of the Vasari volume.

<sup>2</sup> The hall was 100 *braccia* long, 40 wide, and 36 high. The Florentine *braccio* equalled 0.58 meters, roughly 2 feet. These dimensions are from another Mellini account: *Descrizione dell' entrata della sereniss. Reina Giovanna d'Austria* . . . (Firenze 1566), p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> "quattro braccia" according to Mellini, *Descrizione dell' apparato* . . . , p. 5.

hall. By building such a high stage, Vasari gained a trap-room height of almost 8 feet which he needed, as will be shown later, for the large set pieces used in the intermezzi. The height of the dais guaranteed good sightlines at least for the social élite and the first of the "degrees" for the ladies was set at stage level. This meant that only the gentlemen in the orchestra had to watch the proceedings with a certain neck discomfort.

The trap room was shielded by a parapet decorated with staircases painted in an almost whimsical manner.<sup>4</sup> Two doors in this screen permitted the spectators to pass below the stage to other parts of the palace. The stage was framed on each side by a Corinthian column resting on a pedestal. These columns supported the proscenium cornice which spanned the full width of the hall. From the center of the carved cornice shone the appropriate coats of arms. The house curtain was 23 *braccia* wide and 15 high.<sup>5</sup> From these dimensions we may deduce that the size of the proscenium opening was roughly 60 x 40 feet. The curtain was the work of Federigo Zuccheri (Zuccari) who had painted a hunting scene with numerous figures, on foot and on horseback, accompanied by their dogs and falcons.<sup>6</sup> After the manner of the ancients the curtain dropped at the beginning of the performance, revealing Vasari's setting for *La cofanaria*.

The scene shown<sup>7</sup> was the Piazza Santa Trinita with bridge in the background as it had appeared before the rising waters of the Arno had torn it away in 1557. Beyond the bridge the perspective continued with a view of the Via Maggio and the Church of San Felice in the farthest distance. A triumphal arch was also featured in this setting which must have intrigued the Florentines with its recognition value. The stage was lighted by torches carried by eight cupidlike angels flying above.

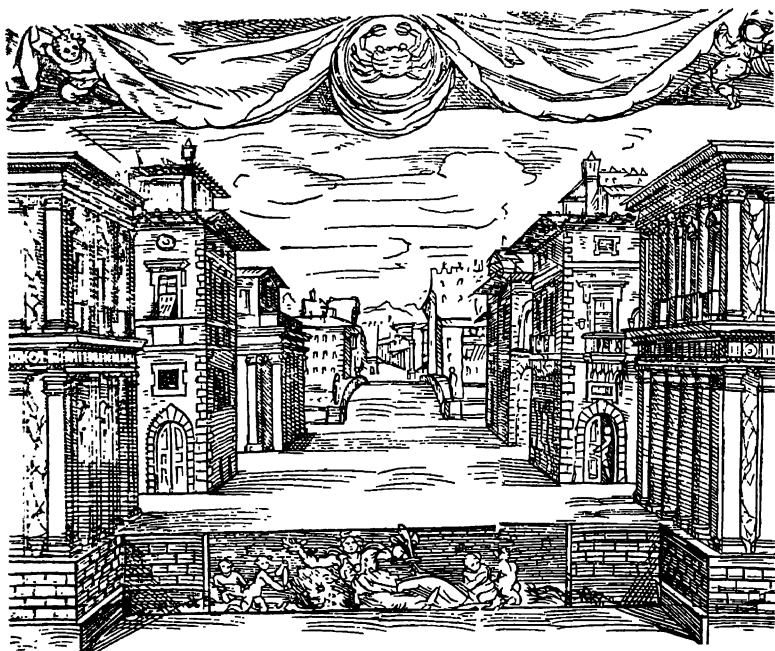
As the audience marveled at Vasari's faithful reproduction of Florentine landmarks, they noticed the novel treatment of the sky which gave the set a quality that his predecessors had never achieved. Previously the air and clouds had been painted on the flat surface of the back scene but Vasari had done away with

<sup>4</sup> "invenzione bizzarra & cappricciosa" according to Mellini, *loc. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Mellini, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> For a reproduction of the Zuccheri sketch, in the Uffizi Collection, see Hans Tintelnot, *Barocktheater und barocke Kunst* (Berlin 1939), Pl. I, illus. 1.

<sup>7</sup> The present description of the set follows Mellini, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9. The crucial passages are given in the original Italian.



A Florentine Street Setting with the Arno Bridge,  
Reminiscent of Vasari's Design for *La cofanaria* in 1565.

The engraving is the frontispiece to *Il granchio* (Firenze 1566), a comedy by Lionardo Salviati, which was produced in Florence in 1566 in the Hall of the Pope under the auspices of the Florentine Academy.

this flatness by creating a sky vault (*un cielo a uso di meza Botte* which could be translated as "semicylindrical" or "semi-spherical").<sup>8</sup> It was made of wood and canvas and painted in imitation of clouds floating in the air. The sky curved about in harmony with the entire setting ([the sky] . . . *girava in tondo, secondo che faceva tutta la Scena*). This novel treatment (*invention nuova*) of the cycloramic sky not only gave greater perspective to the set but also increased the height of the palaces and buildings on the stage ( . . . *faceva sfuggire molto la prospettiva & dava gran ricrescimento agli edificij di quella Scena*). The arching sky had "*cortine di legname*" which cannot mean anything but a shutter that could be opened and closed. When

<sup>8</sup> "*concavo cielo*" according to Cini, *op. cit.*, p. 572.



closed these "wooden curtains," canvas-covered and painted to resemble sky and clouds (*tutto coperto di tele & dipinto con aria piena di nuvole*), blended in perfectly with the immovable portion of the vault. The torch-bearing angels, suspended in mid-air, solved the lighting problem the designer had had to face when using a curved, one-piece sky.

This Mellini passage has been subject to misinterpretation. Hans Tintelnot, for instance, took the phrase "*girava in tondo*" much too literally. He thought it meant "moved in a circle" and thus arrived at the erroneous conclusion that Vasari had made use of *periaktoi*, and with their aid had changed the setting for each intermezzo.<sup>9</sup> He also claimed that the Florentine set changed to a celestial scene for the first intermezzo, or as he put it, "*man sieht nur den geöffneten Himmel auf der Bühne.*" No such total scene shift is indicated in our sources as will be shown in an analysis of the scenic requirements of the six intermezzi. The (presumably) angle-wing side scenes with their Santa Trinita palaces remained standing throughout the evening, and the scenic elements, which indicated a change of locality, descended either from the sky or rose through the traps.

For the first intermezzo the description expressly states that the Florentine set remained revealed (*rimasta scoperta*)<sup>10</sup> while the concave sky over Florence was opened (evidently by moving the shutter) disclosing the view of the mythological heaven from which Venus was to descend. The gilded and bejeweled car of the goddess rested on a cloud and was drawn by two snow-white swans. The Three Graces and the Four Seasons were in attendance while an assembly of divinities (painted perhaps) formed the celestial background. As the cloud with Venus and her seven companions floated downward, sweet music came from back stage, and the hall was filled with the scent of perfume. As Venus's chariot reached the stage floor, Cupid appeared. Seemingly, he was walking on the ground as he entered in the company of the four principal passions: Hope, Fear, Joy, and Pain. Venus then sang two stanzas of a ballad voicing her grievances against beautiful Psyche. The song finished, the cloud rose slowly heavenward, and the shutter closed the hole in the vault. Once

<sup>9</sup> Tintelnot, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> Mellini, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

again the sky was an unbroken unit with no trace of the shutter mechanism.<sup>11</sup> It was now Cupid's turn to sing a stanza as his companions equipped him with bow and arrow. With the God of Love aiming some of his arrows at the spectators, the first intermezzo closed, and Act One of the comedy began.

The second intermezzo filled the break between Acts One and Two. The stage was turned over to the musicians to whom Cupid had given orders to entertain Psyche. The set, however, was still the Florentine one, for Cini wrote that "a little Cupid came out from one of the four streets which had been left on the stage for the use of the actors."<sup>12</sup> These streets provided entrance possibilities for the other musicians: a smiling Zephyrus coming out from one of the streets; allegorized Music from another; Playfulness and Laughter entering through the two remaining streets. As these four took their stage positions, four cupids appeared simultaneously, each coming from one of the four streets. They played a lute concert, then four additional cupids joined them, and all formed a circle to sing a madrigal for which back-stage music provided the accompaniment. Thus ended the second intermezzo.

In the third, Cupid is so busy with Psyche that he is not attending to his professional duties; hence love among mortals dies, and fraud and deceptions take over. Again there is no evidence to indicate that the setting has disappeared. Instead, the stage floor (*il pavimento*) gaped at seven places, and through seven traps rose seven small hills from which stepped two-times-seven Deceptions who sang a madrigal and then disappeared by way of the four streets (*per le quattro prescritte strade*).

More evils befall mankind when Cupid, wounded by a drop of hot oil from curious Psyche's lamp, goes to bed as a patient. The God of Love is sick now, more lovesick to be sure than suffering physically, and the consequences for mortals are catastrophic. The fourth intermezzo had this disastrous quality. Again the stage floor opened forming seven vaporous chasms from whence emerged Discord, Ire, Cruelty, Rapine, Vengeance, and two Anthropophagi (the Laestrygones of Homer's *Odyssey*).

<sup>11</sup> "egli [the sky] in un momento chiusosi, senza rimaner pur vestigio, onde sospicar si potesse da che parte la nugola e tante altre cose uscite ed entrate si fussero" according to Cini, *op. cit.*, p. 574.

<sup>12</sup> "Si vede da una delle quattro strade, che per uso de' recitanti s'erano nella scena lasciate, uscire prima un piccolo Cupidino..." *ibid.*

Each of the seven was flanked by two Furies. Together they danced a galliard, sang a madrigal, and ended with an extravagant morris dance. In wild confusion they left the stage which was now ready for the fourth act of d'Ambra's comedy.

Psyche is now at the mercy of Venus who dispatches her to the Tartarus from where she must return with some of Proserpina's beauty in a box. In the fifth intermezzo the streets were still on the stage for Cini tells us that Psyche was seen walking "*per una delle strade*." She was being followed by her four tormentors: Jealousy, Envy, Worry, and Scorn. When the quintet had reached the center of the stage, four traps were opened from which, amid fire and smoke, four serpents issued adding to Psyche's anguish. As Psyche voiced her despair in a madrigal, four violinists hidden in the bellies of the serpents, and trombones off-stage accompanied her. This bittersweet music left no eye in the auditorium dry. Hardly had the serpents disappeared when a larger trap opened and the barking of Pluto's hound was heard. Cerberus raised the obligatory three heads enveloped in fire and smoke. However, Psyche pacified the monster with a sop. She was also prepared with an obolus for ancient Charon who now appeared in some dark abyss<sup>13</sup> with his bark into which Psyche and her four companions climbed.

The sixth intermezzo closed the evening's theatrical entertainment. Jove has intervened, and Venus's ire has subsided. The wedding of Cupid and Psyche is about to take place. Through a trap<sup>14</sup> rises Mount Helikon, covered with laurel trees and flowers. At its summit there is winged Pegasus, and about the lower portion of its slope are grouped the cupids, Zephyrus, Music, and Cupid with Psyche. For the occasion, Pan is on hand with nine satyrs playing various pastoral instruments. Led by Hymen they all descend from the slope to join in singing an epithalamium, not so much in honor of Cupid and Psyche as of Francesco and Joanna.

In the Mellini and Cini accounts no reference to complete scene changes was found. Whatever "changes" there were resulted from trap devices or, in the case of the first intermezzo, by

<sup>13</sup> "*in una oscura voragine*" according to Mellini, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

<sup>14</sup> "*si vide del pavimento della scena in un tratto uscire un verdeggianti monticello*" according to Cini, *op. cit.*, p. 578.

means of a cloud machine. Never once did Vasari make use of *periaktoi*. As a matter of fact, scene shifts by means of rotating prisms first took place in Florence in 1569 when Baldassare Lanci designed the sets for *La vedova*, a comedy by Cini. Egnazio Danti, the editor of Vignola's treatise on perspective,<sup>15</sup> was in Florence at this time. He was painting maps of the known world on the ornate cabinets in the Sala Nuova della Guardaroba of the Palazzo Vecchio. He labored on this task from 1563 to 1575, thus he also witnessed the Vasari production in 1565. Father Danti makes no mention of *periaktoi* in the Vasari setting, but he devotes considerable space to Lanci's use of turning prisms in 1569. We have no reason to doubt the statement which he made in the commentary of his Vignola edition: "In Florence I saw a comedy acted in the Ducal Palace on the occasion of the visit of Archduke Karl of Austria in 1569. The setting, made by Baldassare Lanci de Urbino, changed twice."<sup>16</sup>

As Danti continues he becomes slightly confusing in the description of the sequence of scenes; therefore we are on safer ground when we turn to two contemporary reports on the 1569 festival which have been totally neglected by scholars.<sup>17</sup> Both the *Raccolto* and *Descrittione* confirm Danti's statement that the face of the scene of *La vedova* was altered by means of *periaktoi*. The scene was shifted from Florence to a country place without the city. The *Raccolto* says that the scene turned in one moment (*in uno momento rivolta*) from the city to a nearby hamlet called Arcetri.<sup>18</sup> The *Descrittione* writes in a similar vein. It says that the scene turned and showed (*la Scena, la quale girata mostrava*) not a place in Florence, but one outside the city.<sup>19</sup> In the published text of Cini's *La vedova* special reference is made to the scene shift: "Before everyone's eyes and with wonderful artifice the entire perspective scene was made to turn and change (*si faceva . . . girare & mutare tutta la Prospetti-*

<sup>15</sup> Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, *Le due regole della prospettiva pratica, con i commentarii del R. P. M. Egnazio Danti* (Roma 1583).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>17</sup> *Raccolto delle feste in Fiorenza — nella venuta del Serenissimo Arciduca Carlo d'Austria per honorarne la presenza di sua Altezza* (Firenze 1569) and *Descrittione dell'intermedii fatti nel felicissimo palazzo del Gran Duca Cosimo* . . . (Firenze 1569). For convenience, we shall refer to the two as *Raccolto* and *Descrittione*. Again the crucial passages are given in the original Italian.

<sup>18</sup> *Raccolto*, p. 10; cf., also, p. 13: "Imperochè dopo il terzo Atto voltatasi (como dicemmo) la Scena."

<sup>19</sup> *Descrittione*, Sig. A6, verso.

va)."<sup>20</sup> In these three descriptions the words "*rivolta*," "*volta-tasi*," and "*girare*" clearly indicate the use of *periaktoi*. Thus several eyewitness accounts attest to the use of revolving prisms in executing scene shifts in the Medici court of 1569 and not previously in Vasari's production there in 1565.<sup>21</sup>

As to the designer in 1569, Danti mentions Baldassare Lanci da Urbino, and the Preface to the *Descrittione* gives the name as Baldassari da Urbino. Moreover, this pamphlet refers to an artist who contributed the costumes for the intermezzi: Bernardo Buontalenti, "*ingegnere & pittore dello Illustrissimo Principe*."<sup>22</sup> In the *Raccolto* Buontalenti was praised for the costumes he contributed for the fourth intermezzo in which peasants, in punishment for their rudeness to Latona, were transformed into frogs.<sup>23</sup> In the croaking of frogs the delighted audience heard echoes of Aristophanes just as the chorus of Clouds in the third intermezzo had evoked the shades of Old Comedy.

Buontalenti, Lanci's assistant in 1569, became the chief designer for the Medicean Festivals of 1585 and 1589. It is generally assumed that in these years Buontalenti brought the use of *periaktoi* to perfection. However, in our sources<sup>24</sup> there is no indication that he employed revolving prisms even when executing some daring scene changes with lightning speed. In 1585 Giovanni Bardi's *L'Amico fido* was produced; in 1589 Girolamo Bargagli's *La pellegrina*. For each Buontalenti designed the scenery for the play and six intermezzi. The setting for Bardi's comedy was Florence; for the Bargagli play, Pisa. For the latter an interesting mixture of straight and curvilinear perspective was designed. One gets the impression that these sets were realized with the help of angle-wing side scenes which, for the intermezzi, were concealed behind sliding wings. The Italian terms used in the accounts of de' Rossi are rather revealing. We read that "a lovely garden covered the house (*che ricoperse in modo le case*)"; that

<sup>20</sup> *La vedova commedia di M. Giovambattista Cini* (Firenze 1569), p. 69. There seems to be no agreement in our sources as to when the scene changes occurred or if there was a second change later in the play. Danti speaks of two changes; Cini mentions only one; and the *Raccolto* and *Descrittione* are not helpful on this point.

<sup>21</sup> However, this is not the first revival of *periaktoi* on record. According to Danti, it was Bastiano da Sangallo, called Aristotile, who first experimented with triangular side scenes in Castro when Pier Luigi Farnese was duke (1537 — 1547), cf. Vignola-Danti, p. 92.

<sup>22</sup> *Descrittione* Sig. A7, recto.

<sup>23</sup> *Raccolto*, p. 15. The story comes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, VI, 313-381.

<sup>24</sup> Bastiano de' Rossi, *Descrizione dell' magnificentiſſ. apparato* (Firenze 1585) and *Descrizione dell' apparato* (Firenze 1589).

"the houses were covered (*furono ricoperte le case*) by oaks, turkey oaks, chestnut trees, beeches, and other trees"; and that "the entire stage was covered (*la scena si coperse tutta*) with maritime rocks."<sup>25</sup>

De' Rossi's continual use of the word "to cover (*coprire*)" establishes with some certainty that Buontalenti was working with flats that were pushed in grooves in front of the "houses" of the main set. In addition de' Rossi informs us that the lights were attached to the "houses" of the main scene but remained mobile so that they could also be used to illuminate the side scenes of the intermezzi.<sup>26</sup> Such an arrangement would not work under a system involving turning prisms.

The conclusion to be drawn from the foregoing is that between 1565 and 1589 *periaktoi* were used at the Medici Court but once: in Baldassare Lanci's experiment of 1569.

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*, *Descrizione* (1589), pp. 37, 42, 55.

<sup>26</sup> "il saggio Artifice...fece artificiosamente, che gli stessi lumi, che allumauan la Prospettina, che eran mobili, e appiccati alle case d'essa, uoltando, senza potersi pero vedere, anche l'intermedio allumassero." *ibid.*, p. 34.

## FARCE—THE THEATRE'S CHALLENGE

*by*

JAMES T. NARDIN

On occasion, many of us who are interested in drama have been accused of forgetting that the theatre is an essential part of it. But those of us who deal with farce cannot be guilty of this omission. Closet drama may ignore theatricality, but closet farce is unthinkable, for the nature of farce demands that no time be given for reflection. Although farce is not intended for the privacy of the study, we can learn much of its nature and technique by noting what must be done in its construction to make an audience accept it, believe it temporarily, and enjoy it throughout in the theatre.

For it is only in the theatre that the playwright can really convince us that a play is actually a farce. We may, to be sure, be given certain advance indications of what to expect, but despite the billboards, pennants, or word-of-mouth reports, the playwright has the same problem with each audience when it arrives at the theatre that he has with the opening night audience who have heard no previous report and read no critical reviews of his play. He must, by the play itself, convince the audience that his play is a farce, and unless he does, he fails. What must he do in order to do this job successfully?

The commercial theatre today provides primarily full-length farces of one type—what has been called the farce of innocuous misunderstanding—and to that type I should like to limit myself. This type is built on an absurd situation from which complications grow, complications which under normal circumstances might well produce serious consequences, but which in the world of farce lead to fun merely because this particular world is so far removed from normalcy that we suspend our normal rational faculties and enjoy the complications because we know they will not produce disaster.

But this definition of the essential situation in farce will not make an audience adopt the frame of mind necessary for enjoyment of the play. The *farceur* must drag us out of a world in which actions often have serious results and persuade us to suspend for three acts our disbelief in a world where they do not. Furthermore, he must do so almost the moment the curtain goes up, for if we start to react with our normal seriousness and judgments, we do not willingly part with them in the middle of the play. Giraudoux's *The Madwoman of Chaillot* suffered in America from the failure to surmount this problem. The French may have hooted at the idea of disturbing Paris for so unimportant an activity as drilling for oil under the city, but Americans, who are accustomed to sacrifice anything in the quest of oil, did not find the opening scenes absurd enough to realize instantly that we had left the world of normalcy; many audiences sensed the difficulty when they said that before the star's first entrance something seemed "wrong with the play." The delay in establishing the absurdity nearly kept *The Madwoman* from becoming a farce.

*Blithe Spirit* likewise shifted in the first act, but the brittle, blasé, marital-comedy dialogue with which Coward opened his play was light enough to make the shift to unalloyed farce easier. When Mme. Arcati, that insane combination of charlatan and believer in spiritualism, arrived for her first seance we had been launched securely into that insane world of farce where delightfully immoral ghosts materialize, kill some people, and try to kill others—an improbability, to be sure, but what fun if it should happen!

To show how experts at farce implant immediately the idea that we have left the normal world and have entered for the duration of the play another world in which the insane is both normal and conventional, let us examine a few recent successful farces.

In the first hundred speeches of *You Can't Take It with You*, which take between three and five minutes, Kaufman and Hart introduce us to ten people and give us knowledge of three others. Ten people can hardly be characterized more than hastily in so short a time; yet at the end of that time, we feel sure that we know much about at least seven of them. We know that Essie and



Ed make and sell candy; that Rheba is accustomed to uncertain numbers of people at dinner; that Penny is writing two plays; that Grandpa keeps snakes and goes to the commencement at Columbia because it is handy; that Mr. DePinna and Penny's husband are making firecrackers in the basement; that the food habits of the family are odd, for their dinner is to be of cornflakes, watermelon, some candy, and some kind of meat; and that the refrigerator is full of cornflakes. When in addition to all this, Ed decides to go print the menu on a portable printing press, which is also in the living room along with the snakes, Mother's typewriter, and some skulls normally used for ash trays but at the moment being used for candy jars, we are more than suspicious that this is not a normal world. When no one in the household finds oddity in anything that is going on, then we are securely caught in the world of farce and settle down to enjoy the complications that such madness must produce.

Similarly, in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, the same two masters of farce present a household consisting of a family whose members are running madly around, receiving telegrams and cables, taking telephone messages. The family is worshipfully obsequious in its frenzied activity because the famous Sheridan Whiteside is a house guest. Their awed sweetness is punctuated by Whiteside's offstage remarks, insulting and obscene, but no one seems to be aware of anything except the good fortune in having had the great man slip on the ice and fracture his hip. Whiteside's remark "You have the touch of a sex-starved cobra!" produces the unlikely purr from the maid "His voice is just the same as on the radio." The neighbors bring plants, calf's foot jelly, in the usual small-town manner of comforting the sick. The conventional awe and the conventional gifts to the sick become absurd in the midst of the unconventionalities of the patient, whose nastiness deserves no such reverence and kindness. We recognize that the world of this play is not really related to the world we know and at once settle down to enjoy the misfortunes of others, with the assurance that they are of no serious import.

In Lindsay-Crouse's *Life with Father*, commercially the most successful of all farces, we come upon what seems at first to be an extremely conventional scene—the dining room of a prosperous nineteenth-century family getting ready for breakfast.

But little signs of oddity appear instantly. A new maid is being trained; everyone obviously is in such terror of the father (who has not yet appeared) that the world seems centered in his wrath. The wrecks on the New Haven Railroad are disasters only because they upset Father; they are much less serious than not having Father's coffee hot. Mother pleads with Father not to frighten the maids because the uniforms just fit the new one. All this and more assure us that this is a farce world, because all the things that should be taken seriously are passed over lightly, supplanted by those of small moment. With such assurance, we are ready to enjoy the incredible crises and misfortunes of the household.

Fundamentally, then, farce is based on an assumption of normalcy. If we are to recognize instantly as absurd the situation with which we are presented, then the author must be sure that he recognizes basically what the general audience considers normal. If the farce is to be absurd because it is patently immoral, then it is a reflection of conventional morality. If we accept as conventional the idea that people are rational and calm when provoked, then the opening of Holm and Abbott's *Three Men on a Horse* is funny because the people rage without apparent cause. If we believe that rational creatures normally approach problems calmly, then the Spewacks' *Boy Meets Girl* is funny because it approaches no problem in any fashion calmer than with intense frenzy. Furthermore, an age that pretends that it has abandoned sentimentality gives itself away by its farces, for the inverted sentimentality of *Three Men on a Horse* or Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* is funny only to an audience that is fundamentally sentimental.

But once an author has initiated his absurdity, he must go on to maintain the inverted attitude about normalcy. He must develop complications with a kind of upside-down logic, but without additional strains on our credulity. Having got us to accept his irrational world, he would be asking too much of us should he continue to add elements not implicit in his basic situation.

Many farces successfully stay within these limits. In Thomas's *Charley's Aunt*, once we meet the eight lovers determined on naïve deceptions that anyone rational would instantly

detect, no additional basic material is needed. The author can simply introduce as many hilariously embarrassing complications as possible and then end the matter by pairing everyone off. The basic elements of *Three Men on a Horse*—the unexplained violent quarrel between Irwin and his wife, Irwin's poor-paying job as a greeting-card-verse writer, and his ability to dope the horses—are eccentric and unlikely enough in themselves to contain all the necessary ingredients for the side-splitting complications which ensue. In *Blithe Spirit*, confronting the sophisticated husband and wife with a spiritual medium, who summons up the ghost of the sluttish first wife, presents all that is needed to produce the irrational complications which develop as the play proceeds.

To hold his audience in the irrational world in which the complications will occur, the playwright leans most heavily on two devices—keeping absurd action on the stage and keeping rational love off.

Activity keeps us from reflecting on the outrageous absurdity of the farce while we are enjoying that absurdity. Anyone who has seen a comedienne play Elvira in *Blithe Spirit* can attest to the importance of vigorous activity in maintaining farce. When Charles learns of Ruth's death, he looks accusingly at Elvira. For a moment the play totters on the brink of seriousness, but just then the doors burst open, and Elvira begins her wild escape from an invisible but obviously furious Ruth. The absurdity of the situation snatches us back into the irrational world where we are delighted at Ruth's death rather than sorry.

As mentioned previously, the author must be wary of letting serious love get on the stage. Shakespeare's addition in *A Comedy of Errors* of the poetic love between Luciana and Antipholus is a breach of this principle and makes the play a less unalloyed and satisfactory farce than Plautus's *Menaechmi*, which limits itself to the coarser attachment to the courtesan.

To keep love compatible with farce, the successful *farceur* is likely to adopt one of two methods. He may treat love as of no profound emotional significance in the lives of his characters, but merely as necessary plot machinery. On the other hand, he may destroy the seriousness by adopting such a device as having

the prostitute feel towards love as wives do, and having wives treat it as casually and flippantly as a prostitute.

If love is treated merely as plot machinery, the love scenes are likely to be brief or unconventionally breezy. The young lovers in *You Can't Take It with You*, for example, are so briefly handled that one nearly forgets them. Yet, without the love story we would never have the delightful bits we do remember—Mother's writing plays and painting; the explosion of the home-made fireworks in the basement; Grandfather's joy in the "acres of graduates" at Commencement; the dinner of pigs' feet, Campbell's soup, and canned corn for the dyspeptic Kirbys.

The unconventional approach to love works just as well to maintain farce on the stage. In *Three Men on a Horse*, Irwin's wife rages jealously and without cause throughout the play while Mabel, the gunman's moll, weeps sentimentally over "Roses are red, violets are blue." In *Blithe Spirit*, Ruth comments with satisfaction that Charles' and her love is not the "first, fine, careless rapture," which is just as absurd as Nanki-Poo's "Modified rapture!" in *The Mikado*. When Ruth's blasé love becomes unreasonable jealous fury and when Charles seems relieved at her death, we are neither upset nor grieved, just highly amused.

Even if the writer of a farce has a plot with numerous implicit complications, treats love lightly in one way or another, and keeps a steady flow of action on the stage, he has one more serious problem to face—how to keep his audience from being drawn back into the normal world during intermissions.

Two major methods of attack have served this end. One method, common in holding the audience from the second to the last act, is to leave the action pregnant with such imminently disastrous complications that we are impatient to see what will happen. When in *Life with Father* Mother's illness has caused Father to agree to being baptized, we are so sure he will try to renege that we can scarcely wait to get on with the last act, to see how Mother will manage to win. In *You Can't Take It with You*, the G-man, who has found Ed's subversive slips in Essie's candy, has hauled the entire family and all the guests noisily off to jail as the curtain falls. The hilarity of having watched thirteen innocent people thrown in jail makes us eager to see what will happen. At the second act curtain of *Blithe Spirit*, Mme.

Arcati has failed to dematerialize Elvira and instead has materialized Ruth. Having had fun with one ill-tempered ghost, we wait eagerly for the increased fun of two of them. Our delighted anticipation keeps us from questioning the absurdity in all these acts.

The second method of holding the audience is more common at the first-act curtain. Instead of forecasting complications, the author frequently attempts to give us the false sense that all is well or he gets us through the first intermission without giving thought to the events of the play at all. The complications are already forecast, but nothing much has been done with them. It is in the second act that the thunder clouds gather. In the first act we get the basic situation, in the second the seemingly impossible complications, and in the third the solution.

*Blithe Spirit* uses the one of false assurance—that all is well, that the deceptions are going to be successful (even though we know better). The first act ends quietly with Elvira running her fingers through Charles' hair. So also, the first act of *The Man Who Came to Dinner* closes with Sheridan Whiteside's satisfied contemplation of his cleverness in having sent someone to break up a romance.

The thought-arresting method is to end the first act with frenzied activity, as in *Boy Meets Girl* where, without a thought for the mother's welfare, the crazy screenwriters develop a blooming movie career for her unborn baby. In the final moments of the scene, the writers are frantically calling for an ambulance, a doctor, and a nurse, for the baby is about to be born in the executive's office. Trumpeters arrive and sound off. The curtain falls, and we collapse to spend the intermission resting, giving the play not a thought.

Instead of mad activity — or sometimes along with it — the author inserts the memorable line, so funny in itself that we may laugh over and over about it throughout much of the intermission, forgetting the play entirely. At the end of the first act of *Life with Father*, Vinnie is confronted with the question as to whether Father has a name in the eyes of God since he has never been baptized. Caught in her own logic, she makes the next step and thinks perhaps they aren't even married. Then, at the sight of one of her children, she gasps as she realizes the horror

of that conclusion. The stage business of that one moment amuses the audience until the curtain rises on the next act. Thus laughter preserves the brittle mood of the farce through the sanity of an intermission.

One of the greatest problems in the farce, however, still remains to be solved, and at this point many an author has failed. He has to unravel his plot and stop the play—quickly. If he dawdles before ringing down the final curtain, the audience tends toward a rational approach, and the farce collapses. Ideally, then, by one method or another, he must remove his complications hastily, suggest that all is well, and let the curtain fall. An excellent example of this method can be seen in *Charley's Aunt*. A deluge of love gets the four couples out of their deceptions, and before we have time to think, all is well with the lovers, the world, and with us, and we can go home.

Another way of ending the farce, increasingly common in recent years, is really not to solve the problem at all. For the moment the problems are solved with the suggestion that life will go on, not normally in the rational sense, but normally and harmlessly in the irrational way it has been moving.

This is the way the most well-known, twentieth-century farces end. In *Blithe Spirit*, Charles is leaving the ghosts behind; they are invisible, but seemingly just as capable of making his life miserable. In *You Can't Take It with You*, the eccentrics of the play (i.e., the conventionally sane) have been converted to irrationality, the income tax problem has been outrageously solved, and all are going on in their happy, mad way. In *Life with Father*, Vinnie has succeeded in getting Father on the way to being baptized, but we all know that the absurd crises of that household are not over; in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, the young couple has succeeded in defeating Whiteside's attempt to keep them from marrying, but as he leaves the house, the overbearing guest again falls on the doorstep, and without difficulty we anticipate an endless repetition of hilarious insult.

The devices and methods, then, are the farce writer's mainstay if his play is to succeed in the theatre. These are the ways in which he gets us to accept initially his world, continue to accept it, and to bring us back at the end to our ordinary world. To

a writer who successfully gets us to enjoy being irrational for an entire evening, high praise and thanks are due. He has understood his audience; he has understood the demands made on him; he has triumphed by masterful techniques.

## FROM THE CAT-BIRD SEAT

### The Production Stage Manager's Notes on *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

by

ROBERT DOWNING

Shortly after mid-century it seems that what has been considered the playwrights' theatre in America is becoming more and more frequently the theatre of the director and designer. Perhaps no production better illustrates this trend than Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.<sup>1</sup> This 1954-1955 winner of both the Pulitzer Prize and the Drama Critics' Circle Award came to the Morosco Theatre, New York City, on March 24, 1955.

In *Cat* Mr. Williams continues his revelations of southern mores by unlocking the Pollitt family album. He introduces a wealthy Delta planter, known as Big Daddy, who is dying of cancer. While one son and daughter-in-law circle like vultures over Big Daddy's ten thousand acres, the old man's favorite son, Brick, has become a hopeless alcoholic whose marital life is in a snarl because of the suggestion of homosexuality which has clung to his relationship with a schoolmate, now dead. In effect, the playwright opens a Pandora's box and the result is a fluttering, sprawling and sometimes terrifying drama of maladjustments, disease, decay and mendacity.

Lacking the strong central dramatic structure of some of Williams' earlier works (*The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Summer and Smoke*, for example), but not so diffuse as *Camino Real*, *Cat* is a simmering work which tumbles and erupts much like the summer storm that figures in its third act.

To mount the drama in Big Daddy's Mississippi plantation house, Jo Mielziner designed a set that is at once unique and daring. Visualizing the bed-sitting room of Brick and Maggie

<sup>1</sup> Tennessee Williams, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, published by New Directions Books (New York 1955).



Pollitt (the play's young leads) almost as a battleground suspended in a boiling thunderhead, Mielziner has tilted the floor of the room forward, implementing in a completely modern sense the centuries-old raked stage. Then the designer went a step further. He permitted the downstage corner of his room to jut through the proscenium opening, across the apron, and into the audience. It was possible at the Morosco to remove the center section of two rows of orchestra seats to make room for this forestage. No house curtain was used but a transparent traveler closed in at the normal curtain line, concealing two thirds of the playing area. Lighted from front by special projections secured to the balcony rail, this curtain reveals the brooding patterns of shadowed jalousies. Whenever stage action commences, the projections fade away as backstage illumination from overhead pipes and several booms of "tormentor" lamps fades in. Thus each scene blends gradually into the audience's consciousness as the transparent traveler slowly opens.

Mielziner's projecting ramp unites the picture-frame stage with a form of the Restoration theatre platform, an innovation which seems near to being a nod from a ranking contemporary scenic artist toward partial arena staging for future Broadway productions. Indeed, Mielziner has recently discussed construction of a new playhouse in which the stage would extend into the auditorium.<sup>2</sup>

Mielziner, who began his theatrical career with a brief fling at acting with the Theatre Guild, was twenty-three when he designed his first Broadway set. The occasion was the Guild's production of Molnar's *The Guardsman*, starring Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. In addition to creating the sets for Tennessee Williams' *Glass Menagerie*, *Streetcar* and *Summer and Smoke*, Mielziner has reached the theatre's mid-century by designing memorable scenery for such disparate authors as Shakespeare, O'Neill and Chekhov. The unforgettable bridge, arching above the set for Maxwell Anderson's *Winterset*, came from Mielziner's drawing board. So did the scenery for Kaufman and Ryskind's *Of Thee I Sing* and the Runyon-derived *Guys and Dolls*.

<sup>2</sup> One of the three legitimate and three musical theatres to be part of the Lincoln Square Cultural Project which, it is hoped, will be opened in New York City in the season of 1959-1960.

*Cat's* tilted bedroom has no walls. Its fragmentary ceiling is a floating canopy. Doors and windows are imaginary and a gallery, L-shaped and composed of duckboards, runs like a catwalk around the upstage sides of the room. The stage is backed with a gauze curtain masking a cyclorama. Against this depth-illusory background, lights and shadows, racing clouds and reflections of distant fireworks are seen at various points in the action. A row of mirrors, concealed at the foot of the gauze "cyc," reflects a shimmer that suggests the crest of a nearby stream.

As with *Streetcar* and *Camino*, Elia Kazan's imaginative direction of *Cat* makes full use of the set. It is astonishing, for example, to note how ominous, at certain intervals, is the sound of women's heels on the duckboards of the gallery. Nonexistent doors are "slammed" by actors—in the freest and most effective use of stage pantomime seen in recent years. There is constantly an awareness of the living plantation just beyond the borders of the stage. Indeed, the prompt script for *Cat* contains a veritable scenario of offstage dialogue, bird calls, songs and action that reach the audience mainly as counterpoint for events in full view.

Answering the question asked most frequently of the actors in *Cat*: the slanted stage presents no real problem in ambulation. The play was rehearsed in "the flat," on the stage of the small auditorium atop the New Amsterdam Theatre in New York whereon *Streetcar* was also rehearsed. Players needed only a few hours on the actual set to make compensating adjustments of posture and movement for acting on a floor that pitches forward. At first, some of the actors hesitated to stand at the extreme downstage point of the set which placed them directly above the heads of many members of the audience. A sense of vertigo from the height sometimes seized a player, especially when he was partially blinded by bright lights from two follow-spots, lamps on the balcony rail and the beams from special lighting towers that had been added to upper stage boxes of the Morosco.

After a few performances, however, the cast of *Cat* was completely at ease on stage. Once or twice, Brick lost a crutch into the pit, but a spare was always available on the set, near his couch, so action was not interrupted by the accident. Persons in front-row seats, close to the place where Brick is thrown to the floor by Big Daddy, have on occasion uttered startled exclama-

tions, but the general tenseness of the scene precludes disruption of the play. It is interesting to note that the old-fashioned stage directions of "upstage" and "downstage," still very much in use in the contemporary theatre, have a literal meaning for the cast of *Cat*.

Mielziner and Kazan have furnished their *Cat* set sparsely. A modern bar unit with built-in radio and television sets shares domination of the room with the fussy headpiece of a bed—a wicker cornucopia which, incidentally, has been featured in most of *Cat*'s advertisements, posters and tack cards for the production, just as the galleried New Orleans house became the advertising "trademark" for *Streetcar*. A backless couch, an inconspicuous side table and a small love seat complete the appointments of *Cat*. The bed-sitting room is covered with a flamboyant floral wall-to-wall carpet, and set in the floating fragmentary ceiling is a baroque fresco depicting two pudgy cupids—a design apparently much admired by the former occupants of the room, Jack Straw and Peter Ochello. As with so many Williams' characters, these lascivious old gentlemen do not appear in the play, but the dramatist's use of such characters makes his off-stage people indispensable participants in his plots.

As in *Streetcar*, the moods of *Cat* are "painted with light" (a phrase that has become the identifying code-term for Century Lighting Company which has supplied the electrical equipment for *Cat*, *Streetcar* and hundreds of Broadway productions). *Cat* takes place in the span of a single evening. The stage is first bathed in sunset colors, then illuminated by the rising moon. Background lighting is reduced in intensity or lost entirely during key scenes when two or three actors emote in isolated pools of light. These constantly changing gradations of light are augmented with two follow-spots located in booths at right and left in the rear of the balcony. There are, of course, no footlights.

Productions as complicated as *Cat* are usually nightmares for stage management and production crews, particularly during the try-out period when, in addition to coping with a new show, the staff must also deal with out-of-town stagehands who, in recent years, have become less and less "ept." It is unfortunate that old-time craftsmen have all but vanished and that the younger men, in an era of sporadic booking of legitimate attractions in

"dogtown" playhouses, are normally busy with operating motion picture projection machines.

Happily the producers of *Cat*, The Playwrights' Company, undertook no extensive tour with it. Prior to Broadway, it was presented only at the Forrest Theatre in Philadelphia—a playhouse superbly equipped and ably manned.

As always, the careful overlapping preparations of Mielziner and Kazan were worked out to the last detail. The producers chose an excellent production crew with Harry Green, the most brilliant young electrician in show business,<sup>3</sup> as anchor man.

Even with devoted planning, it is possible for a try-out period to develop into a series of technical mishaps which cannot be anticipated. This did not occur with *Cat*. The first technical rehearsal ran with the smoothness of a final dress rehearsal; the initial dress rehearsal looked like a première. In his "thank you" note to the stage manager on opening night in New York, Kazan wrote that he had not been aware of a single backstage problem—high praise from a meticulous director who had once been a stage manager himself.<sup>4</sup>

While *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* reveals the advancement of contemporary design and direction, it also underscores the necessity of developing a dramaturgy equal to the achievements in other departments of stagecraft. It is possible, with a play of *Cat*'s structure, for creative technicians to extend the playwright's scope even to the point of helpful collaboration. But, there is always the danger, lacking strong writers, that the appurtenances of the stage may exceed the content of the drama. Just recall what happened at the end of the Nineteenth Century when spectacle and melodrama enjoyed enormous popularity mainly because of their scenic effects and violent action.

As a team, Mielziner, Kazan and Williams have given fresh wings to the American stage at mid-century.<sup>5</sup> It is to be hoped that this freedom of flight, demonstrated by the celebrated *Cat*-bird, will not falter for lack of brave new plays.

<sup>3</sup> The Antoinette Perry Award Committee is in agreement. In April 1956 it presented its first "Tony" to a stage technician. The recipient was Harry Green.

<sup>4</sup> Elia Kazan joined the Group Theatre in 1932 as assistant stage manager, and also as actor. In 1935 he began his career of directing with *The Young Go First* for the Theatre of Action; his first major production was Ardrey's *Casey Jones* for the Group in 1938.

<sup>5</sup> For backstage information concerning *A Streetcar Named Desire* see the author's "Streetcar Conductor: Some Notes from Backstage," *Theatre Annual*, 1950, pp. 25-33.

THE RESTORATION PROMPTBOOK OF  
SHIRLEY'S *THE SISTERS*

by

EDWARD A. LANGHANS

The most fully annotated Restoration promptbook extant is James Shirley's *The Sisters* which forms part of the 1653 octavo collection, *Six New Playes*, in Sion College Library, London, England. In about 1833 when Alexander Dyce was finishing the Gifford edition of Shirley's works, he was shown this unique copy, but he could make neither head nor tail of the "piteously scrawled" prompter's notes that "the initiated alone probably understood."<sup>1</sup> He virtually ignored it, therefore, and not until Montague Summers studied it in 1920 were any of its valuable contents made public.<sup>2</sup> Summers quoted, often incorrectly, about forty of the prompt notes as examples, but he left two important types of markings unnoticed, and failed to mention that the total number of MS insertions in the copy was over 250. More recently Richard Southern, writing on "Stage Directions" in *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, incorrectly assigned to this promptbook some MS notes that actually derived from Lewis Theobald's *The Perfidious Brother* in the Eighteenth Century. It would seem that Southern misread Summers' reference to the copy in *The Restoration Theatre*.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the following study, along with the six facsimiles which Sion College has kindly allowed to be reproduced, will make temporary amends for the abuse and neglect this extremely valuable document has suffered.

<sup>1</sup> *The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*, ed. Alexander Dyce (London 1833), V, 354.

<sup>2</sup> Montague Summers, "A Restoration Prompt-Book," *TLS* (June 24, 1920), p. 400, reprinted in *Essays in Petto* (London n. d.), pp. 103-110. All references to Summers' study are to the reprint. Summers touched upon the copy in several of his other works, and Plate XIII of *The Restoration Theatre* (New York 1934) shows a facsimile of page 13 of the promptbook.

<sup>3</sup> Summers, *The Restoration Theatre*, p. 142.

*The Sisters* was first licensed on April 26, 1642 by the pre-Commonwealth King's Players, and they probably performed it before the closing of the theatres later that year. Along with numerous other old plays, the Shirley comedy was allotted to Thomas Killigrew and the Restoration King's Company on or about January 12, 1669.<sup>4</sup> Though this group may have played the work prior to this date, no record of a production exists; indeed, were it not for the existence of the promptbook, we would have no certain record of a Restoration production of the play at all. Summers, by determining when the cast indicated in the promptbook could have been assembled, narrowed the only possible performance time to between 1668 and 1671 when the troupe was at the theatre in Bridges Street, Drury Lane. Apparently a pre-war MS promptbook had not been handed down, for Killigrew followed what seems to have been the usual practice with pre-Restoration plays: he had a promptbook prepared from a printed copy of the play. The particular copy in question may well have belonged to Samuel Pepys' friend, Mrs. Knepp, who acted the part of Paulina in the production, for we find MS strokes opposite nearly every one of her speeches. At any rate, the copy was given to the prompter—Charles Booth was his name, according to prompter John Downes of the rival company<sup>5</sup>—and it was carefully edited and annotated. From the notes in this best of the six existing Restoration promptbooks<sup>6</sup> we can learn much about staging practices in those times, and we learn still more by observing what kind of information is conspicuously absent.

It is possible to reconstruct from the prompter's references to specific actors the cast for which the promptbook was prepared:

<sup>4</sup> See Lord Chamberlain's books in the Public Record Office, London, England, Press mar.: LC 5/12, p. 212.

<sup>5</sup> John Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus* (1708), ed. Montague Summers (London n. d.), "To the Reader" [p. xviii].

<sup>6</sup> The other existing Restoration promptbooks are Edward Howard's *The Change of Crowns*, ed. F. S. Boas (London 1949); John Wilson's *The Cheats*, ed. Milton Nahm (Oxford 1935); and Shirley's *The Wittie Faire One*, noted by Bertram Joseph, "Stage-Directions in a 17th Century Copy of Shirley," *Theatre Notebook*, III (1949), 66-67. To these I would like to add two more which I found in the British Museum: a 1616 edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Scornful Lady*, and a 1682 edition of Thomas D'Urfey's *Madam Fickle*. I am at present working on a full edition of *The Sisters* and its relationship to these other copies I have studied.

Farnese—George Beeston  
Contarini—William Harris  
Antonio—William Cartwright  
Frapolo—Dick Bell  
Longino—Graydon  
Strozzo—Reeves  
Lucio—Marmaduke Watson  
Giovanni and a servant to Antonio—Lydall  
Stephanio and A Scholar—Littlewood  
Piperollo—Joe Haines  
Pulcheria (disguised as Vergerio)—Nell Gwynn  
Paulina—Mrs. Mary Knepp  
Angellina—Mrs. Margaret Hughes  
Francescina—Mrs. Yokney

The last name was not mentioned in the *dramatis personae*, and the actors playing the minor roles of Rangino, Pacheco, Fabio, Morulla, Countrymen, Citizens, Petitioners, and Gentlewomen are not identified. It should be observed that in two instances there is a doubling of parts indicated; further, that such leading players of the company such as Hart, Mohun, Lacy, Kynaston, Mrs. Corey, the Marshall sisters, and Mrs. Rutter are not mentioned. It would seem that a summer or Lenten production done by the "young people" is indicated.

An interesting question is raised by the prompter's constant references to specific actors. Could this promptbook have been of use for a later production of the play with a different cast? Surely not, for the changes in the prompter's notes would have been so numerous that the text of the play would have become too cluttered to be of service.

Although it was common practice in the old repertory companies for actors to cling to particular parts, Summers proved that the cast indicated above could not have been assembled after 1671.<sup>7</sup> Can we suppose that promptbooks were prepared for particular productions only, and not used—perhaps not even saved—for revivals in later years? The practice seems wasteful, yet the evidence of practically all existing seventeenth-century promptbooks would suggest it. If this was the case, then we can better

<sup>7</sup> Summers, *Essays*, p. 105. Summers notes that Joe Haines joined the King's Company in February or March, 1668, and that Nell Gwynn retired not later than 1671, thus giving limiting dates to *The Sisters* production.

understand why only a handful of promptbooks has survived from a century when hundreds of plays were produced.

The facsimile of page nine (Fig. 1) of the Sion College copy of *The Sisters* shows a variety of markings, not the least interesting of which (ignored by Summers) are the horizontal, single strokes opposite all of Paulina's speeches. They seem to relate the copy to actress Knepp. Can we not visualize Mrs. Knepp, soon after the role was assigned to her, going through her copy of the play, marking her speeches, even as today's actors do? (Further examples of these strokes can be seen on pages ten and forty-two, reproduced here as Figs. 2 and 4).

Another mark which Summers left unnoticed is the cross-hatched symbol drawing attention to actors' entrances. This crosshatch is a common entrance signal in Restoration promptbooks. By 1700, however, it seems to have gone out of general use and abbreviations, such as LDPS (lower door prompt side) and VDOP (upper door opposite prompt), were in use. Since there were at least four, and possibly six, proscenium doors at the Bridges Street playhouse, and since stage directions in many plays indicate frequent entrances upstage between the wings, it is curious that the prompter employed so un-descriptive a cue as a crosshatch. Perhaps his assistant—for he would have needed one to cue entrances opposite prompt—used the promptbook as the basis for a more specific cue sheet posted backstage. Though the crosshatch usually signalled actors' entrances, we occasionally find it used for sound effects. In *The Sisters* there are two such examples, both in Act IV: one for "shooting within"; the other for a door knock (facsimile not here reproduced). Musical sound effects, unless accompanying an entrance for actors, are not signalled in the promptbook by the crosshatch.

Page nine (Fig. 1) offers an example of an actor warning. Marmaduke Watson, who played Lucio, is here warned about sixteen lines before his entrance. This is slightly less than the average of twenty lines' warning for a single entrance. Multiple entrances, such as pairs, trios, and quartets, received about a twenty-five line warning; first entrances, group entries, and entrances following a costume change were usually warned thirty or more lines in advance. Exceptions to these numbers exist, of course: re-entrances soon after an exit received only a brief warning, for example, and occasionally the availability of white



*The Sisters.*

Some Queen conceald?

*Pa.* I am Independent, and sole regent here.

*An.* So so,

Where's your Nobility? they are to blame  
Not to attend---

*Pa.* Who waits?

*Enter Giovanni, Stephanio.*

*An.* But they do want white Staves, this is  
Not State enough.

*Pa.* It shall be mended, let them be remembered.

*An.* She's in earnest--- and

If I were worthy to advise you Madam,  
Your grace should be a little more reserv'd,  
And entertain none that did treat of Mariage  
To your private conference, untill they had  
In publick receiv'd audience like Ambassadors.

*Pa.* I like the Counsell well, it shall be so,  
The next that comes shall find it my good Uncle.

*An.* She's incorrigible.

What if you commanded those that do attend  
Your person to observe you on their knees  
Sometimes, they must be humble to your highness;  
I can forget my gray hairs, name, and blood,  
And teach your Servants duty.

*Pa.* The example  
Will edifie the household, and you may,  
By fair degrees rise to our Princely favour.

*Enter Lucia.*

*Lu.* Madam, the Lord *Contarini* is arrived  
The Castle.

*Pa.* He comes a woing to me, let it be  
Your Office reverend Uncle to acquaint him,  
Our pleasure is to give him Audience  
To Morrow in full State, untill when Uncle,  
Make it your care, his entertainment be  
Such as becomes the greatness of his blood,

*And*

10

*The Sisters.*

And one, on whom the Prince, we know, bestows  
His speciall grace.

*An.* D'ee hear sweet Niece? be not you transported,  
This is no dream, the man is no mock-lord.

*Pa.* I'll be a Princels here, as you directed,  
If he can humble himself to Ceremony,  
Promise him honourable access, and freedom,  
If the Conditions please him not, he may  
Return, and leave our Court.

*Exit.*

*An.* Is this in Nature? well I'll follow her,  
And if she be not pass a shame, and senses,  
I will humble or confound her.

*Exit.**Ring.**James 3 Bags* ACT II.

*Enter Longino, Strozco, Binding Fabio, and*

*fabio, & Land Morilla.*

*Ma.* **A** H sweet Gentlemen, we are very poor,  
And have a great Charge.

*Str.* We do come to ease you of your charge.

*Fa.* Pity my age.

*St.* You must then pity our youth.

*Enter Piperollo disguised with three bags.*

*Pi.* Here, share and share like.

*Mo.* Alas we are undone.

*St.* What shall we do with them?

*Pi.* If you have bound her hands and feet, you  
May try whether she be a Witch or no, there's  
A Pond in the backside, if she swim, so---  
For him?

*Fa.* Have some compassion, tis our whole estate.

*Lo.* You have a Son, a pious child we hear.

*St.*

space on a page determined when the actor could be warned. Only rarely did the prompter neglect a warning, but in other promptbooks of the period the practice seems erratic. There was apparently no regular policy governing to whom a warning should refer: some in *The Sisters* name the actor, while others cite the part he is playing. Minor characters, however, are more often than not referred to by character name. This may indicate that the lesser roles were not cast until rehearsals were well under way and the promptbook made up.

The "act ready" warning near the bottom of page nine (Fig. 1) is placed, as can be seen, eighteen lines before the conclusion of the act on page ten (Fig. 2). This warning was needed to prepare the musicians for the entr'acte, and the stage crew for the scene shift. There was no warning needed to herald the end of Act V, of course, but it is worth noting that though the other acts were warned, Act III was not. The interval between Acts III and IV may have differed from the other intervals, being, perhaps, a regular intermission as we know it today, or did the prompter simply forget to insert the warning?

The reproduction of page ten (Fig. 2) shows "Ring" after the last line of the act. This signalled the musicians, who were probably out of the sight of the prompter and needed an audible cue, to begin their music. It was not meant, as we shall see, as a signal for the scene shift.

On this same page we note that the prompter marked "3 bags" for Joe Haines before the beginning of Act II. This is one of only two "prop" marks found on the MS. The other appears later in this same scene and calls for "three staves" (not reproduced). Several other properties are mentioned or implied in the text of the play, but nowhere else did the prompter make a marginal note. Either very few properties were used in this particular production, or, what is more likely, a separate and more detailed prop list was kept by someone other than the prompter. So, too, with the costumes, of which there is no mention in the prompt notes despite indications in the text that several costume changes were required. It seems clear that in Restoration times a promptbook was exactly what its name implies—a promptbook, not a full production book. This makes sense, for with a fast-changing repertoire, the actors, as Pepys often affirmed, fell "out" of their parts frequently, and the prompter must have had his hands full

just prompting, and, with his helper, signalling entrances, sounds, and (possibly) scene shifts. Technical details, stage movement, business, line interpretation, and characterization seem not to have been his responsibility, and consequently they are either scarcely noted or not mentioned at all in the prompter's book.

Page ten (Fig. 2) shows the symbol for a scene shift: a circle, usually with a dot in the center. The exact meaning of this symbol is revealed by the promptbook of Edward Howard's *The Change of Crownes* in which we find that a whistle started a shift to assure co-ordinated movements of wings and shutters by stagehands on each side of the stage as they operated a *vista* changes. Apparently the number of whistle blasts corresponded to the numerical order of the scenes in the act. Even though *The Sisters* book makes no mention of whistles, it seems likely that they were employed for the production; since scene shifts were not properly the responsibility of the prompter, it is not strange that he did not mark whistle cues here. Incidentally, this circular symbol for scene shifts persisted into the Eighteenth Century.

In *The Sisters*, as in *The Change of Crownes*, shift symbols and set descriptions were entered in a hand other than that of the prompter. The second hand would doubtless have been that of the Restoration equivalent of our technical director or stage manager—the “machinist” he seems to have been called then. In *The Sisters* book his notes look as if they had been entered prior to those of the prompter; when he made only a symbol, leaving the set designation blank, as he did at the beginning of Act V (not here reproduced), the prompter completed the entry. Though of necessity the promptbook contained shift cues and set descriptions, the prompter himself was apparently not responsible for these technical details any more than he was for properties and costumes. The fact that the book contains extremely brief and often vague scenic notes suggests that the machinist wrote out elsewhere a detailed schedule of the particular pieces of scenery to be employed, into which grooves they would slide, and the sequence of their use. In the book we find some scenic notes scratched out or overlaid with new entries, and there are even instances of set designations that are patently incorrect. What the book contains, then, are only brief, preliminary notes, jotted down by the machinist when planning the produc-

tion. The promptbook as it stands could hardly have served as a technical cue sheet during an actual performance.

A series of actor warnings and entrances can be noted on pages forty-one and forty-two (Figs. 3 and 4). Notice that when an entrance stage direction appears at the top of a page the prompter was careful to have a crosshatch at the bottom of the preceding page. This careful preparation of a script is unusual; in the MS promptbook of John Wilson's *The Cheats*, for instance, the prompt notes trail off to practically nothing after the opening act.

The prompter of *The Sisters* was careful, also, in his editing of the text, as the example on page forty-one (Fig. 3) shows. The line across the middle of the page, plus the marginal speech ascription "An," rightly give the last two lines of the 1st Petitioner's speech to Antonio. Elsewhere in the text minor printing errors are corrected, missing entrances supplied, incorrect speech ascriptions changed, and textual inconsistencies mended. But our prompter was only human—he failed to supply a necessary actor entrance once, and did not catch three faulty speech ascriptions. Considering everything, however, his task of textual emendation was well done.

The set designation, on page forty-two (Fig. 4), is rather vague unless the theatre had a set so labelled which could serve for either a "Court" or "Chamber." Such may have been the case. Stock settings were necessary with so many plays in the active repertoire, and the utility of scenery was multiplied when parts of one setting could be used in combination with parts of another. In Act II of *The Sisters*, for example, "fabios house & land-chape" (see Fig. 2) is called for; in this instance the wings depicting a "wood" used in Act I may have been combined with a new pair of shutters showing a house exterior. Instances of such a practice may be found in the 1663 quarto of William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* in which the printed stage directions clearly show how settings were used in combination.<sup>8</sup>

The scenic note on page forty-five (Fig. 5) has been scratched out, then rubbed over. It appears to have read "Court or/Castle," followed by the circular symbol. Curiously, Summers

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion of this practice, see Richard Southern, *Changeable Scenery* (London 1952), pp. 110-120.

# *The Sisters.*

That was a loud one!

3 I have given wounds have kill'd the lookers on  
With horror of their gaping, and have march'd  
Ten miles a day thus deep --

*Fr.* In dirt?

3 In blood.

*Fr.* Upon those wooden leggs?

*Ans.* Poor souls! I pity 'em, here honest men,  
Divide this bag, and pray for my good Uncle.

*Omnes.* Blessings on you, Madam.

2. Equall division, come.

1. Stay, in the first place, I brought you hither,  
Therefore my part is most considerable.

3. I'll have no Prerogative.

2. Nor I.

1. But I will.

Do not I know you both for cheating Rascals?

Thus are good things cozen'd, and you sh<sup>d</sup> not  
Lose your reward; send for some Officers.

2, 3. We are betray'd.

*Ex. 2, 3.*

*Ans.* My Uncle.

*Ans.* They have found their eyes and leggs again,

Neece I observe your Charity, but you see not

The inside of these things, and I did mean

And hope these sums might serve your self;

Some Ladies would have considered

A new Gown and trinkets; *Frauncestina,*

I see little amendment, she'll undo me

In pious ules.

*Fr.* She has entertain'd these Gentewomen

*Enter Vergerio.*

And that young Gentleman does good upon her

*Ans.* I like it well, he's carefull of my Lord;

And if she meet his honorable treaty,

She may learn Pride at Court, should our Art fail

She smiles — I wo't not interrupt 'em.

42

*The Sisters.**Enter Giovanni.**Gio.* My Lady entreats the presence of her Sister.*An.* Do's she entreat? Yes, you may visit her Sir if you please, I'll trust her to your conduct.*Ver.* 'Tis my ambition to attend her.*An.* Hark you,Remember who you are, and carry things *Hands & Reason*  
For the credit of my heir, and one that must be  
Right Honourable Shortly, if I hear

Thou flout'st her, thou sha't have another Gown

And Petticoat embroider'd, or but beat her

And put me to a pension; fare you well,

*Francescina* wait, wait all upon your Mistress.*Exit**Exeunt**Enter Paulina.**Pa.* No news yet of the Prince? he fill'd my dream

Last night, 'twas a golden glorious slumber;

Me-thought we both were led into a Temple,

Where all our rites of Mariage were perform'd

In the presence of a thousand Angel-Capids.

*Enter Piperello, and stumbles.**Pi.* 'Twas my devotion, Madam, to present you  
The News, I could not break my neck upon  
A better cause.*Pa.* Is the Prince come?*Pi.* The Prince is at your service; though I slept  
At Chamber door, it is my happiness  
To be the first Messenger.*Pa.* Of what?*Pi.* I desire no reward Madam, 'tis sufficient  
I know what will become of us all, you  
Remember the *Caldean*; all has happen'd,  
I thank Astrology.*Pa.* For what?*Pi.* Your money is gone, your rents have been room  
And my head broke to purpose; things are visible.*Exit*

*The Sisters.*

*Ver.* Your Uncle too---

*Arg.* May erre in his election.

*Ver.* But his anger---

*Ang.* My prayer and tears may soften.

*Ver.* Do not drefs

Your eys with sorrow *Angellina*, this  
Too gracious an influence upon  
Your iervant must command my utmost duty.  
Upon this white hand I breath out my heart,  
And when I pay affection to another  
Mistress, in your revenge, her beauty blast me !  
But we may be observ'd.

*Ang.* Be all my guide.

*Ver.* This must be manag'd wisely, we are lost els.

*Arg.* We are now arriv'd the Castle *Francescina*.

*Fr.* We attend.

*Enter Prince Farnese, Contarini.*

*Fa.* I am obscur'd sufficiently.

*Con.* My life on't.

*Fa.* Here are great preparations, and the people  
Flock as to see some triumph, this *Paulina*  
Will be ador'd i'th' Country.

*Con.* But her Sister,  
With an extreme of sweetness and humility  
Will take the wonder off, she so transcends.

*Fa.* Your words fall from you,  
I have observ'd my Lord, with too much passion;  
She's but a woman, and may be no miracle,  
When a clear eye is Judge.

*Con.* Sir I owe  
All that I am in fortune, name and greatness  
Unto your person, next whom, give me leave  
To say I rate no expectation  
Equall to be her servant; yet I find  
Her cold to those desires, that court her with  
All honour, I shall humbly beg, your grace

*Exeunt.*

*M. Harries*

*Every body  
to Lady*

*Flourish  
to Lady*

*When*



quotes the entry just so, without mentioning its having been cancelled or smeared.<sup>9</sup> Could it have been clear and clean in 1920 and smeared since? There are several such smudges in the copy, and one can only hope that no latter-day John Payne Collier has been at work. Actually, the entry *should* have been crossed out, for the text indicates no change of locale at this point.

On this same page there are two warnings that vary from the norm. Usually, when a group entry was to be made, the prompter dutifully listed the individual actors to be called, but here, near the end of Act IV, he entered a blanket warning, "Every body." And the flourish warning to the musicians is typical of those given for musical sound effects; the actual flourish does not come until thirty-two lines later with the grand entrance of everyone, at which point in the promptbook both the crosshatch and "Florish Here" (page not here reproduced) serve as cues. In passing, it is interesting to note that the cue for the musicians was not an audible one, therefore the instrumentalists were probably backstage at the time.

Page fifty-eight (Fig. 6), showing the final speeches of the play, contains several points of interest. We can see a deletion in the text. Whether the Master of the Revels, Sir Henry Herbert, demanded the cancellations or not is debatable, for the text contains no clear evidence of his having censored it personally, as was his wont.<sup>10</sup> If the players did their own censoring, they should be commended for their prudence: even obscure bawdry is marked for omission.

Other cuts in the text are not matters of censorship, but rather suggest pruning for a performance with a reduced cast. One character, who is mentioned only in a stage direction and has no lines, is edited out of the script with a stroke of the prompter's pen. A song in Act III is bracketed for omission, perhaps because there was no suitable singer in the company, or to shorten the running time. Several other cuts, a few of them lengthy, do suggest a real attempt to shorten the play.

Additions are few and minor, but the MS couplet on page

<sup>9</sup> Summers, *Essays*, p. 108.

<sup>10</sup> For a full study of Herbert's Restoration censorship, see Arthur F. White, "The Office of Revels and Dramatic Censorship During the Restoration Period," *Western Reserve Bulletin*, N. S., XXXIV (1931), 5-115; see, also, *The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert*, ed. J. Q. Adams (New Haven 1917).

58

*The Sisters.*

It were a sin to innocence, and our honor  
 Would encourage Treason by example,  
 If they should scape all Justice, take 'em to Custody.  
*Frapolo*, we confine you to this Castle,  
 Where If she please your Bride may accompany you  
 Till we determine otherwise.

*Fra.* 'Tis some mercy; but

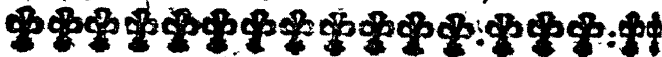
I shall be getting Children, and two nothings  
 Wo't not maintain a Family, 'twere as good  
 To hang me out o'th' way, ~~ere Charge come on,~~  
~~Or take away my tools~~, I shall be working.

*Fay.* Provision shall be made you shall not sterve  
 Nor surfet Sir.

*Ang.* Because I call'd her Sister,  
 I will contribute something to their fortune.

*Fay.* What thy own goodness will direct; and now  
 Remove the Scene to Court, to perfect there  
 My own, and *Parma's* happiness; pride has  
 Met with severe reward, and that high justice  
 (That Governs all) though envy break with her  
 Own Poyson, calls the Amazed World to see  
 What blessings wait upon *Humility*. *Ring*

*Exeunt.*  
*From my state gone, some else shall have  
 For him I married I will make my slave*



FINIS.



fifty-eight (Fig. 6) deserves some comment. Summers assigned these two lines to Frapolo who speaks the Epilogue, and then, in order to make this assignation probable, he translated the curious symbol (or is it a "doodle"?) near the MS couplet as "Bell," saying that it referred to Dick Bell, who was playing Frapolo. Summers gives the couplet as follows:

*Bell.* Tho my state's gone some rule I will yet have  
For her I married I will make my slave.

Changing the text's "him" to "her" serves the argument that Frapolo spoke the lines, but Summers made no mention of the line across the page and the marginal "Pau" which clearly give the bulk of the last speech and the couplet to Paulina.<sup>11</sup> As for the strange "doodles": the Restoration promptbook of Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Scornful Lady*, possibly prepared by the same prompter, contains not two but seven such marks in a row in the middle of the play with no apparent meaning whatsoever.

Examining the promptbook of *The Sisters* is an exciting and valuable experience. By reading the play along with the prompter's and machinist's notes we come close—closer, perhaps, than even Pepys can take us—to recapturing that fleeting moment when a play came alive on the Restoration stage.

<sup>11</sup> Summers, *Essays*, p. 109.

We thank Sion College Library of London, England for permission to reproduce the foregoing pages of the promptbook of Shirley's *The Sisters*.—The Editors.







THE THEATRE ANNUAL



COOPER as PIERRE

*"When they are Chains"*

*Value Preserved.*



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# THE THEATRE ANNUAL

*EDITORS:*

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THE AMERICAN THEATRE'S FIRST STAR:  
THOMAS ABTHORPE COOPER

by

Lael J. Woodbury

William Dunlap, creator and historian of much of America's early theatrical history, believed that when he engaged Mrs. Merry (Warren) to perform at the Park Theatre in 1801, she was the person who "...for the first time in America, was brought forward as (what is now called) a star...."<sup>1</sup> A star, explained Dunlap, is "...the sun of the drama, around which the great and little planets and their satellites [are] to revolve." However, if a star is also an actor who performs principal roles for a succession of companies, who permits the glorification and exploitation of his name for publicity purposes, and what is most important, who possesses the genius of brilliant artistry, then Dunlap overlooked an actor whose claim to stardom was much stronger than Mrs. Merry's.

Dunlap's 1798 contract with Thomas Abthorpe Cooper created, in effect, the first "star" of the American Theatre. For while companies in repertory was the invariable practice of the early nineteenth century, Cooper began after 1798 to perform almost exclusively leading roles, not only at the magnificent Park, but with many companies in many theatres. In fact, he initiated the practice of traveling from one company to another for which he performed only prominent roles.

These facts, when viewed alongside Cooper's lasting critical and popular acclaim, plus his acceptance into the nation's highest social circles, convince me that he was the first actor in America ever accorded the stature of a star. And, for those who need "conclusive" evidence, in temperament, arrogance, and bad humor, he was the peer of any actor—star or apprentice!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> William Dunlap, *History of the American Theatre* (London 1833), II, 149.

<sup>2</sup> Among other eccentricities, he was known to hire elephants to publicize his benefits, to throw cold water in the faces of his children to discipline them, and to keep an entire company waiting in rehearsal while he took care of his correspondence.

As is often the case, Cooper's unique historical position was not readily apparent to his contemporaries — for the leading roles he performed at the Park in 1798 he was paid only twenty-five dollars a week. But his unprecedented status as a star was but the logical fruition of his formative years. Born in England in 1776, he was thoroughly instructed in the actor's art (as well as in republican idealism) by Thomas Holcroft, the actor and playwright. At the age of sixteen he apprenticed briefly with John Philip Kemble and Mrs. Sarah Siddons, and on October 19, 1795 he debuted in London as Hamlet, of which performance Charles Macklin said: "... it was the most successful appearance, in one so young, he'd ever seen."<sup>3</sup>

Since, despite his successful Hamlet, Cooper was not offered liberal terms to perform in London, he accepted Thomas Wignell's tender of a rising salary with periodic increases to perform in Wignell's Philadelphia company. Whether his first American appearance was in Baltimore in *The Wheel of Fortune*, or in Philadelphia (December 9, 1796), as Macbeth, I cannot conclusively determine. But in New York he first appeared, in 1797, as Pierre (*Venice Preserved*), and in 1798 made his first appearance at the Park Theatre as Hamlet.<sup>4</sup>

For a short while Cooper monopolized the leading roles of the Park Theatre (and occasionally performed for Wignell's company in Philadelphia), but he soon was forced to share the public with John Hodgkinson, Dunlap's partner, who was enjoying current popularity in the melodramas of Kotzebue. This competition, aggravated by Hodgkinson's claim as co-manager of the company to the choicest roles in the company, sent Cooper back to Philadelphia. He remained there until Dunlap, freed from Hodgkinson's tyranny, asked him again to perform a series of roles in New York.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Charles Durang, *History of the Philadelphia Stage from 1749 to 1855*, I, 55. This work was compiled from the papers of John Durang, with notes by the editors of the *Philadelphia Sunday Despatch*. It was never published in book form; it was printed as several series of newspaper articles, and these were arranged and illustrated with engravings, letters, and playbills by Thompson Westcott in 1868. This citation refers to the volume owned by the University of Pennsylvania a positive microfilm reproduction of which is in the library of the University of Illinois.

<sup>4</sup> The 1798 contract with Dunlap was signed despite threats of suit from the Philadelphia company to which Cooper was legally obligated. The ensuing publicity was partially responsible for the unusually large audience which attended his first Park performance.

<sup>5</sup> No doubt Cooper appreciated the salary increase of five dollars weekly which his new contract guaranteed — thirty dollars each week. At this time he was a star in every but the financial sense!

Cooper complied with Dunlap's request in the spring of 1801, but he did not, henceforth, confine his work exclusively to the Park stage. According to W. B. Wood, as early as 1802 Cooper began a regular practice of starring, "...finding it less laborious and far more profitable than the drudgery of a stock actor."<sup>6</sup>

However, he assured his continued domination of the New York stage by assuming the lease and management of the Park for the two seasons of 1806-1808. Then, in 1808, he relinquished his managerial duties to Stephen (Half) Price, and began the arduous practice of performing leading roles at both the New York and the Philadelphia theatres. On Mondays and Wednesdays of each week he appeared in New York, after which he immediately journeyed, by means of sturdy carriages and a series of swift horses, to Philadelphia where he performed on Fridays and Saturdays. By 1815 his entire professional life was given to travelling and appearing as a star with resident repertory companies.

After a performing career of almost forty years, he gave his final New York appearance on November 24, 1835, as Antony. During the course of his career he visited every state in the Union, performed over one-hundred sixty-four roles in sixty theatres, acted some forty-five-hundred nights, and traveled over twenty-thousand miles.

The practice of "starring," or performing leading roles for a succession of repertory companies, was inaugurated in America by Cooper, and was highly dependent upon his artistic ability. It could have been profitable only if Cooper's reputation was such that the mere announcement of his name promoted sufficient ticket sales to justify his employment. Therefore, the fact which most strongly persuades me that Cooper was truly a star, and that he was entitled to that appellation was his great and enduring popularity. To be sure, he was a fine actor, he was unusually handsome, and he had a resonant, capably modulated voice. But the surprising fact is that his acting retained public favor even beyond 1830 — almost twenty years after the romantic actors George Frederick Cooks and Edmund Kean revolutionized acting styles in both England and America and should have made Cooper's classic style obsolete! By 1830, in fact, Edwin Forrest had established his new "American," heavy-handed, muscular style of acting.

<sup>6</sup> William B. Wood, *Personal Recollections of the Stage* (Philadelphia 1855), p. 418.

In theory, at least, Cooper should have been a romantic actor himself, since Holcroft had infused him with republican ideals typical of the romantic movement (Cooper once made an earnest attempt to fight in the French Revolution); yet his classic style contrasted sharply with those actors (*e.g.*, Cooke, Kean, and Forrest) whose style of performance depicted the "commonness" and individualism which the romantic revolution glorified. Evidently, the style of classicist John Philip Kemble influenced Cooper's art more than did Holcroft's political precepts.

The roles in which Cooper excelled are evidence of his classicism. He had a tremendous repertoire and was unusually versatile, but his greatest creations were the lofty, heroic personages which classic actors always favored: Virginius, Brutus (by John Howard Payne), Damon (*Damon and Pythias*), Pierre (*Venice Preserved*), Coriolanus, Macbeth, Hamlet, Rolla (Kotzebue's *Pizarro*). Theodore S. Fay in the *New York Mirror* of 1823 said:

There is something so elevated in the acting of this gentleman — so perfectly according with the lofty spirit of a great soul, that [it] has raised him to the highest rank he can attain. He seems to have been created to personify the noble characters of times gone by. His figure, his face, his very voice breathes forth the high-toned grandeur of Roman greatness. In portraying the overwhelming passions of a noble soul, I believe he stands unrivaled. He is surpassed by Kean in *Lear* and *Othello*, but in *Virginius*, *Brutus*, and *Damon*, I question whether he is not superior to any other in the world. His form and voice give him infinite advantage over his distinguished rival. Kean is eminently successful in the tenderness of *Jaffier*, the hopeless agony of the aged *Lear*, the subtle, penetrating villainy of *Richard III*, and the jealous and distracting love of the noble *Moor*. But when he would rival Cooper in the proud, unbending character of ancient times — in those god-like spirits, who rose out of the desolation of war — who brooded over the broken ruins of their country's greatness, or triumphed over the vestiges of their own blasted hopes — whose mighty souls bore up amidst ruin and sorrow, and 'walked abroad in their own majesty' above the frailties of human nature, it is here we find Mr. Kean is surpassed. He wants the elevated and conscious dignity of Cooper, the power to draw up a noble figure to its full height, and look down upon the inferiority of all around — to display might in every limb, greatness and majesty in every motion, and show us in appearance as well as action the great character he personified. This is the superior power of Cooper, and all this power is brought forward in the play of 'Damon and Pythias.'

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Joseph Norton Ireland, *A Memoir of the Professional Life of Thomas Abthorpe Cooper* (New York 1888), p. 86.



I repeat, however, that this, the first third of the nineteenth century, was the period of the frontiersman, "Jeffersonian democracy," and the "noble savage" (in such plays as *Metamora*, or the *Last of the Wampanoags*). Here Victor Hugo and his fellow romanticists seized the French stage, and, in England as well as on tour in America, Cooke, Kean, and J. B. Booth depicted ugly, unmodified, and intense "natural" emotions in such roles as Shylock, Richard III, and Sir Giles Overreach (*A New Way to Pay Old Debts*). Obviously, then, Cooper performed in the classic style to audiences which had enthusiastically embraced the philosophy of romanticism. His acting must have been of "star" calibre even partially to have satisfied these entirely new attitudes and tastes.

We can reconstruct Cooper's style.<sup>8</sup> He was a tall, well built man with a strong straight nose and long, curly hair. His voice was rich and flexible. He evidently moved with dignity, grace, and decorum — "a certain imposing bearing" according to James Murdoch who saw him.<sup>9</sup> When John Howard Payne saw him in London he wrote: "In natural grace, Cooper is far beyond any actor I have ever seen, and he is, too, the best *Hamlet* on the stage, he is even more scholarly than Kemble, and if not so startling as Kean, or so grand as Kemble in the part, he is certainly far less rude than the former, and more natural than the latter. . . . His deportment to me is always full of natural dignity; his action and whole manner is chaste, vigorous and characteristic, and his enunciation is always fine."<sup>10</sup>

Cooper's "chaste" and "natural" dignity evidently imposed considerable restriction on the vehemence of his action. Whereas Kean was a violent and neurotic whirlwind, Cooper was a steady, grandiloquent, and magnificent monsoon. As N. M. Ludlow said: "You beheld the silent and gradual approaches of the storm of passion, and you stood transfixed with the grandeur of the scene."<sup>11</sup> The emotional scenes of the play, then, were where Cooper demonstrated most forcefully the peculiar characteristics of his style.

<sup>8</sup> Read Harold Newcomb Hillebrand, *Edmund Kean* (New York 1933), p. 332, if you wish to compare Cooper's acting with the style most popular in England and America after about 1821.

<sup>9</sup> James E. Murdoch, *The Stage* (Philadelphia 1880), p. 87.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Brander Mathews and Laurence Hutton, *The Kembles and Their Contemporaries* (Boston 1900), pp. 243f.

<sup>11</sup> N. M. Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It* (St. Louis 1880), pp. 234f.

In such scenes, although Murdoch believed that Cooper seemed to "describe" rather than actually to *feel* the emotion of the character he portrayed, all writers agreed that Cooper's *forte* was the frenzied eloquence of outraged honor, of despair, and of guilty ravings. On October 25, 1823, the *New York Mirror* stated:

The genius of Mr. Cooper is always powerful, and he never fails to do himself honor where there is a strong passion tearing the heart, that is too haughty to show its power — where two different emotions are striving for mastery — or where he can wrap himself in lofty meditation, or display the outline of his fine figure in some striking position. But when the feelings become too strong for longer reserve — when passion, like a mighty flood breaking down all obstacles, will have way, and goes forth in its fury, scorning every opposition — then it is that Mr. Cooper rises to the height of histrionic excellence, and exhibits specimens of acting seldom, if ever, surpassed.

Consider this example — the moment when, as Damon, he confronts his beloved friend Pythias who has been slain in his place:

Carrying his energy almost to the verge of caricature, who, that has seen Mr. Cooper in this part [will forget] the perfect stupor which for an instant overcomes his whole frame, suddenly roused to frenzy by the ideal picture of Pythias flowing for him. . . . Nothing on the stage — not even the third act of *Othello*, by Kean — ever surpassed this. It was painfully true to nature, equalled only by his delirious joy when he arrives just in time to save his friend, and falls exhausted by his efforts at the foot of the scaffold — receiving, instead of tumultuous applause, the tears of the audience. This was the conception of a master mind.<sup>12</sup>

However, Cooper depended on vocal skill more than on bodily activity. He was an accomplished elocutionist, and so intent on the poetic melody of his lines that he cultivated a musical speech characterized by beauty of tone, variety of inflection, and perfect cadence.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, "correctness," or reasoned precision, was to him more important than the reproduction of the spontaneous impulses of conversation. Indeed, conversational quality, as contrasted with the melodic

<sup>12</sup> Francis Courtney Wemyss, *Theatrical Biography (or the Life of an Actor and Manager)* (Glasgow 1848), p. 70.

<sup>13</sup> From a review titled "Mr. Cooper" in the *New England Galaxy*, reprinted in Joseph T. Buckingham (ed.), *Miscellanies Selected From the Public Journals* (Boston, 1868), 221.

quality of poetry, was expressly rejected as being too base or too common for the stage.

For example, this is a statement of John Phillip Kemble's philosophy, which Cooper was often accused of adopting: "The verse, that has been modulated with the happiest skill, claims to be uttered in a cadence of corresponding melody: the language of poetry is by no means common speech — nor is it to be lowered by a rugged and colloquial familiarity."<sup>14</sup>

This preoccupation with precise declamation, as well as the desire to personify dignity and decorum, sometimes prompted Cooper to interrupt his performance until he was in favorable position for delivery. This negative criticism by an unidentified writer in the *Theatrical Register* of 1810 not only complained of the "tedious and painful precision" of Cooper's enunciation, but also, by inference, denounced

... that see-sawing of the hands — that formal and studied gesture which requires all the finish and grace of mr. c. [sic] to make it enduring — that stage trickery which, instead of suiting the action to the word and making the gesture spring from the quick impulse of the feeling, induces the actor to be continually throwing himself into some statue-like attitude, so that a sudden glow of emotion, or burst of passion is kept suspended until the actor has fixed himself into some pretty posture in which to bring it forth. Thus the flashes of the author, the quick and ever-varying feelings to which the scene should give rise, are incessantly *hanging-fire*, and the spectator is constantly reminded that the scene before him is altogether a deception and the actor a mere puppet playing a part. We are sick of... these tedious, tardy enunciations — these laborings after grace — these rowings of the arms — twistings of the head — sawings of the air — these pauses without signification, and all the other fantastic grimaces, by which a set of unmeaning creatures weary us to death, and really seem to imagine that they are successful imitators of mr. [sic] Cooper, because they have not suffered one of his faults to escape them... Indeed, we are sorry to see him so partial to these straddle-bag attitudes, wherein the body is shown at full length from the point of one finger, to the extremity of the opposite toe.<sup>15</sup>

A portrait of Cooper as Pierre in *Venice Preserved* admirably illustrates the posturing mentioned.

One final characteristic of Cooper's style deserves mention. Since Cooper abstained from energetic activity such as pacing, abrupt starts, or strong crosses, he compensated for

<sup>14</sup> James Boaden, *Memoirs of the Life of John Philip Kemble* (London 1825), I, 175ff.

<sup>15</sup> *The Rambler's Magazine and New York Theatrical Register for the Season of 1809-1810*, II, 27ff.

this lack of movement with restrained pantomime and elaborate gesture. Consequently, Fred Belton catagorized Cooper in the "tea-pot" school of acting (one hand on hip with the other extended in gesture), and attributed to him the following tendencies toward literalness: "For instance, in 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' when describing a pack of hounds, he used to count them, as in imagination, with his forefinger, as low as possible, and then run up his voice to its highest elevation; he would point to his heart if in love, or run his hand over his face if speaking of a lady's beauty."<sup>16</sup>

Thus we see the classic style in which Cooper worked—a style which stressed cadenced, melodic (but sometimes intensely emotional) speech, and dignified, elegant behavior. In spite of changes in tastes and attitudes which encouraged the romantic style, and forced classicist John Philip Kemble from the pinnacle of popularity, Thomas Abthorpe Cooper retained his prominence and competed successfully with the greatest romantic actors of England and America. In view of his artistry, as well as his professional practices, T. A. Cooper was, according to definition, the first star of the American theatre.

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IBSEN AND SHAW:  
THE TRAGIC AND THE TRAGI-COMIC

by

Norbert F. O'Donnell

It is well known that Bernard Shaw proclaimed with his usual vigor that his plays were strongly influenced by the work of Henrik Ibsen. Blessed by the existence of *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, critics who have commented on this influence have focused largely on the question of the accuracy of Shaw's analysis of Ibsen's drama. Although opinion on the point is not unanimous, William Irvine seems to speak for a majority when he concludes that Shaw is most successful in interpreting the plays which Ibsen wrote between *Pillars of Society* and *The Wild Duck*, sometimes called his "social dramas," but is considerably less perceptive in his comments on the Norwegian's earlier and later work.<sup>1</sup> The clue which this judgment offers to the nature and extent of Ibsen's influence on Shaw has not led to adequately systematic and concrete comparisons of the plays of the two; nor have Shaw's admirers, in such comparisons as they have offered, shown sufficient knowledge of the excellent criticism of Ibsen which has appeared in English during recent years.

If one puts aside entirely the details of Shaw's criticism of Ibsen and concentrates on the study of plays by the two men which deal with common themes, he concludes at once that Ibsen's "social dramas" did indeed exert an important influence on Shaw. *A Doll's House* and *Candida*, for example, show considerable likenesses in their attack on the attitudes toward marriage which were conventional in the late nineteenth century and on the corruption of human relationships which these attitudes produced. The likenesses are those which one can observe between a number of Ibsen's plays of the period of *A Doll's House* and, most particularly, Shaw's earliest work, the *Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant* and the *Three Plays for Puritans*. However, *A Doll's House* and

<sup>1</sup>William Irvine, *The Universe of G.B.S.* (New York, 1949), pp. 143-4.

*Candida* contrast subtly in tone and technique in ways which point to the fundamentally different preoccupations of their authors. What these differences are becomes somewhat clearer when one considers plays in which Ibsen and Shaw confront the problem of social change and its ethical implications — *Rosmersholm* and *Major Barbara*. What begins as a study of influence becomes almost entirely a study in contrast when one turns to plays in which the two hero-worshippers present their versions of the character and fate of the hero — a contrast adequately introduced by, say, *The Master Builder* and *The Apple Cart*. In general, the whole series of comparisons and contrasts confirms what we already know: that Ibsen created a modern tragedy and Shaw a species of modern comedy. More important, it suggests concretely the reasons why this is true and indicates the existence of a boundary beyond which Shaw could find no use for perhaps the most characteristic aspect of Ibsen's potential influence.

Both Torvald Helmer in *A Doll's House* and the Reverend James Morell in *Candida* play to the hilt the conventional role of the dominant husband, the mentor and protector of the womanly wife. Both suffer ironic disillusionments. Helmer must face the fact that he has played his role with such entire success that his wife finds him a stranger. Morell learns that his masculine pose has been a fraud, that it has been sustained only by the knowing cooperation of a wife who is stronger than he. The two marriages are corrupt for parallel reasons. Because he is a thoroughly conventional man, Helmer reveals in a moment of crisis that he regards his wife only as an object. Because she is no more than a charming Philistine, *Candida* betrays her similar, though somewhat more affectionate, view of her husband. Nora leaves her home to take up the search for an adult identity. Marchbanks, who has idealized *Candida*'s maternal qualities, turns away in disgust from the spectacle of Morell's humiliating acceptance of his relationship with his motherly wife. Both plays condemn by implication socially induced attitudes which produce automatic behavior and the suppression of the truly human.

Yet there are undercurrents in *A Doll's House* and *Candida* which subtly suggest an ultimate difference in the attitudes of their authors toward their common theme. Despite certain elements of contrivance reminiscent of the well-made play, Ibsen has labored successfully to create the illusion of

actuality on his stage. Inevitably the perfectly plausible words and deeds of his characters are called upon to convey an almost unbearable weight of implication. As M. C. Bradbrook puts it, "Ibsen will not allow the smallest action to escape from the psychopathology of everyday life."<sup>2</sup> Only in Nora's final outburst against Torvald does Ibsen permit one of his characters — and this, too, quite plausibly — anything resembling a full, ringing statement of his attitudes. Shaw's method, on the other hand, is one of brilliant explicitness.<sup>3</sup> Even the minor figures in *Candida* are able at any time to give eloquent statements of their motives and attitudes. Certainly there are moments of true feeling, mingled with laughter, in Shaw's play — for example, the scene in which Eugene reproaches the blandly cruel Candida for making Morell suffer, the final scene of Candida's "choice" between the two men. On the whole, however, the somewhat artificial self-consciousness and articulateness of the characters removes *Candida* from the world of feeling in which *A Doll's House* has its being to the more nearly intellectual world of comedy.

The likenesses and differences between the two plays are those which exist between a number of Ibsen's "social dramas" and the plays which Shaw wrote before the turn of the century. In the work of both men the attack on the conventional attitudes of society is constant. Thus in *Pillars of Society*, Ibsen comments ironically on commercial morality, in *Ghosts* on notions of "duty," in *An Enemy of the People* on the political sins of the "compact Liberal majority." Thus Shaw satirizes commercial morality in *Widowers' Houses*, romantic attitudes toward prostitution, war and the revenge ethic in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Arms and the Man* and *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* respectively. As constant as these likenesses in theme between the two writers, however, are the differences in tone and technique displayed in *A Doll's House* and *Candida*.

These technical differences are in the end indicative of an important contrast between the ultimate preoccupations of Ibsen and Shaw. Hearing of the young Shaw's lectures on his work, Ibsen remarked, "I was surprised that I, who had made it my chief task in life to depict human characters and human

<sup>2</sup>*Ibsen, the Norwegian* (London, 1946), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup>Eric Bentley, *Bernard Shaw* (Norfolk, Conn., 1957), p. 130.

destinies, should, without conscious intention, have arrived in several matters at the same conclusions as the social-democratic moral philosophers had arrived at by scientific processes."<sup>4</sup> Accepting an invitation to address a group of feminists, the author of *A Doll's House* demonstrated his usual resistance to sociological interpretations of his work by announcing that he did not quite know what the "woman's cause" was and delivering a lecture on the supreme importance of the wife and mother.<sup>5</sup> Shaw, as everyone knows, was voluble on the subject of the social implications of his plays. One feels that Katherine Gatch is not wide of the mark in interpreting his remarks about *Candida* as indicating that he saw its structure as that of the Hegelian dialectical pattern — Eugene, the pre-Raphaelite poet, representing in the end a fusion of Morell's Christianity, *Candida's* bourgeois practicality and his own critical intelligence, liberated by his encounter with the other two.<sup>6</sup> Shaw's comments on the play are at any rate decidedly on this level of abstraction. The point is that Ibsen, while by no means unaware of the social forces which play upon his characters, was most deeply interested in a subjective world of personal relationships; whereas Shaw, decidedly aware of the corruption of personal relationships by institutions, was preoccupied with the objective world of social forces in whose perspective he saw the individual problems of his characters.

The distinction becomes especially meaningful when one considers Ibsen's tragic version of the problem of social change, *Rosmersholm*, and Shaw's *Major Barbara*, a tragicomic treatment of the same theme. Both plays present us with the image of society inevitably in flux. Both assume that the problem of the nature of the "conversions" — both of leaders and followers — which will accompany change is central to the formation of an attitude toward the fact of social evolution itself. Both confront their protagonists, potential leaders in social change, with the problem of ends and means. Rosmer's "conversion" involves him in a tragic dilemma; the problem and ends and means which his change of heart imposes is so entirely insoluble that he and Rebecca, deeply in

<sup>4</sup>Quoted by Eric Bentley, *The Playwright as Thinker* (New York, 1946), p. 129.

<sup>5</sup>Brian W. Downs, *A Study of Six Plays by Ibsen* (Cambridge, 1950), p. 150.

<sup>6</sup>"The Last Plays of Bernard Shaw: Dialectic and Despair," *English Stage Comedy*, English Institute Essays (New York, 1955), pp. 131-2.



love, end in suicide. At the climax of Shaw's play, Cusins and Barbara Undershaft pledge to marry and to change their world. The contrast points to the differences in sensibility between Ibsen and Shaw which created the limit beyond which it was impossible for Ibsen to influence Shaw's work.

Against a background of political conflict between Norwegian liberals and conservatives, Rosmer comes to feel that it is his mission to "ennoble" his fellow countrymen, to spread enlightenment and happiness where his conservative family has always stood for their opposite. His conception of the conversions he wants to achieve is, significantly, intensely personal. He has no love for the spirit of either of the contending parties in the politics of his country; he wishes to free the minds and purify the wills of men. He yearns to the end to believe in his power to ennoble men through "tranquil love." His one convert is Rebecca whom he has ironically never imagined to be in need of conversion. She has been transformed from a woman who has regarded him as an instrument—first for the satisfaction of her wish to do "something great," later for the satisfaction of purely erotic desires—into the loving human being whom we see in the play. She describes the way in which the transformation has come about: "But when I found myself sharing your life here, — in quiet — in solitude, — when you showed me all your thoughts without reserve — every tender and delicate feeling, just as it came to you — then the great change came over me. Little by little, you understand. Almost imperceptibly — but at last with such overwhelming force that it reached to the depths of my soul."<sup>7</sup> Such is the nature of conversion in Ibsen.

Yet for all of his capacity to achieve the kind of relationship which he has achieved with Rebecca, Rosmer is tragically weighed down by burdens of guilt which can be shed only in the millrace. There is first of all the guilt springing from his sense of his responsibility for Beata's death. After all, he has been in love with Rebecca without knowing it; he has betrayed his wife as surely as Peer Gynt is responsible for the bastard brat of the Troll King's daughter. Then there is his burden of inherited guilt as the descendent of the house of Rosmer. His mission, we must remember, is assumed not only because of

<sup>7</sup>*The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen*, ed. William Archer (New York, 1908), IX, 144. All references to Ibsen's work are to this edition.

a positive love of the kind of human relationship which he hopes to see prevail among his countrymen, but also because he feels driven to expiate the sins of his race. He feels that it is his duty to "spread a little light and gladness here, where the Rosmer family has from generation to generation been a centre of darkness and oppression (p. 68)." When Rebecca questions his decision that he must go with her to death, asking if his feeling may not be as delusive as the legendary white horses of Rosmersholm, Rosmer replies: "It may be so. For we can never escape from them. We of this house (p. 163)." Given his situation, he cannot escape thinking of sin and expiation. Perhaps the final tragic irony of the play is that the ethical sense which makes him capable of the influence he has exerted on Rebecca grows out of the guilty past of the house of Rosmer. However this may be, the play tells the story of a man *inevitably* trapped between his desire to see new enlightenment prevail and a sense of guilt which grows from a past which he regards as unenlightened.

Naturally we focus increasingly on Rosmer's inner dilemma as the play draws to its close. We tend to forget that at the outset his most concrete desire was to announce his allegiance to the liberal political cause and that it is, in fact, his declaration of this intention to Kroll which precipitates the sequence of events which leads to the millrace. It is Rosmer's encounter with the political world which first introduces the problem of ends and means which is finally so much a part of his struggle to judge his personal destiny. In the interests of the liberal political cause, Mortensgård disillusions Rosmer by telling him that announcement of his new adherence to liberalism must include no reference to his religious apostacy. The conservative Kroll similarly disillusions him by making it clear that he will use any methods — even against his friend Rosmer — in order to further the cause he serves. The most terrible example in the play, of course, of presumably high political aims corrupted by the means used to serve them is that of Rebecca's cruel scheme to "free" Rosmer from Beata in order that the liberal cause may gain two effective leaders. Involvement in the objective world of causes, the play seems to say, may very well lead to moral self-betrayal — possibly inevitably does so.

The major themes of *Rosmersholm*, as recent criticism has suggested, reflect Ibsen's constant preoccupations in his

plays; they are the themes of "vocation" and "inherited guilt."<sup>8</sup> Out of all of the temptingly various and contradictory possibilities of life, Ibsen implies, a man must choose those which are truly *his*; he must choose the sequence of acts which make up his "vocation." Brand is a man who can make the choice. Peer Gynt, until the very end, is one who cannot. More often than not even the man who is capable of recognizing his unique destiny, or of thinking that he does, is involved in tragic or pathetic contradictions. A victim of the lack of clarity which is the human lot, he bears the burden of his own past ethical errors. Equally important, if he is a truly moral (or even neurotically sensitive) person, he is aware that he is involved in a guilty past which cries out for expiation.<sup>9</sup> One may see these concerns of Ibsen's reflected not only in *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* but also in other early work and in the very "social dramas" which influenced Shaw. Thus Mrs. Alving, unlike the despicable Hedda Gabler, is a woman with a true vocation — but one which forces her tragically to face her own part in the creation of the Alving inheritance which, in Ibsen's view, seems to be quite simply the human inheritance. Thus Gregers Werle, for neurotic reasons, believes that he recognizes his true vocation — and thinks of suicide when he is confronted with facts suggesting that he has projected his own sickly self-hatred upon his sufficiently, but only normally, guilty father. His involvement with Hialmer Ekdal is that of a seedy Brand with a down-at-heel Peer Gynt. The Ibsen plays which seem to comment most faithfully on the changing social scene are, behind the scene, tragic or satirical comments on what their author regarded as permanent dilemmas of human life.

It is not so with Shaw's work. He is the historical relativist who stresses the primary importance of the changes in attitudes, customs and institutions which the historical perspective reveals. Not that he too is not deeply concerned with the quality of individual human lives. However, it is noticeable that in *Major Barbara* "conversion" is a somewhat different

<sup>8</sup>See Downs, pp. 23ff. *et passim*. See also Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot* (New York, 1953), pp. 41-98.

<sup>9</sup>Ibsen's view of the problem of vocation and of the nature of tragedy seems to have been influenced, directly or indirectly, by the ideas of Kierkegaard. See Downs, 13ff. *et passim*. For a provocative interpretation of *Brand* and, by implication, other Ibsen plays in the light of Kierkegaard's theory of tragedy, see M. S. Stobart, "New Light on Ibsen," *Fortnightly Review*, LXVI (1899), 231-8.

thing than it is in *Rosmersholm*. For one thing, Shaw makes it conditional upon certain economic and social circumstances. Ibsen does not suggest that Rosmer is able to achieve the quality of life which is within his power because he is the heir of a rich and powerful family. In Shaw's play Undershaft firmly reminds his daughter that he has "enabled Barbara to become Major Barbara" — wastefully, carelessly, generously concerned with the great issues of life — by rescuing her from "the crime of poverty."<sup>10</sup> The blighted souls of the poor who come to the Salvation Army shelter can be touched in a meaningful way only when these people have something of the economic security and social status which Barbara has come to regard as her birthright. It is his acceptance of this view which leads Cusins to take over the munitions factory, the symbol of the power to make conversion effective, and Barbara to marry him because he does so. Their common "vocation" is to give others something of the freedom from the intimidations of an artificial system of economic and social pressures which they themselves enjoy. Significantly, their relationship to one another — our best evidence of the nature of the conversions they seek to make — is sharply in contrast to that between Rosmer and Rebecca.

Cusins and Barbara respect and understand one another; each cares deeply about the other's fate. They are, however, rather strikingly independent. Cusins, the "connoisseur of religions," is sympathetic to Barbara's passionate involvement in the Salvation Army but watches its development toward disillusionment with something of a mixture of participation and amusement. Barbara, we recall, would have refused to marry Cusins if he had not accepted the responsibility of the munitions factory. The two have perhaps less than the usual impulse of lovers to total identification with one another; their relationship happily opens outward to take into account objective issues upon which their view of one another depends. Rosmer and Rebecca go into the millrace in order to prove that their profound identification with one another is as profound as they have believed it to be. By the end of the play, all question of Rosmer's influence on numbers of men has become very shadowy. The political world has clearly

<sup>10</sup>*Selected Plays of Bernard Shaw* (New York, 1949-57), I, 433-4. All references to Shaw's work are to this edition.

disillusioned and defeated him. In Shaw's comedy of social change, the chief "converts" find that, after all, they agree and set out on their chosen business. In Ibsen's tragedy of social change, they die in order to convince one another that they have, in the past, surmounted the barriers of loneliness and guilt which permanently separate one human being from total participation in another's life.

Barbara and Cusins know nothing of the tragic guilt which haunts Rebecca and Rosmer. Barbara is cheerfully indifferent to the fact that her income is from a source which everyone in her family, for different reasons, regards as tainted. Cusins proves his mettle by taking over the munitions factory which for centuries has exported destruction, mutilation and death, intending that in the future it shall serve humanitarian purposes. Downing moral scruples of a sort which prove paralyzing to Rosmer, he concludes that the end justifies the means, that "the way of life lies through the factory of death (p. 445)." At the moment of his great decision, Cusins is not as close to Rosmer as he is to Peter Mortensgård. Both Cusins and Mortensgård are able, as Rosmer is not, to down traditional moral scruples in the interests of the achievement of liberal ends to which they are committed. While Ibsen plainly views Mortensgård as a dubious figure, Cusins is the hero of *Major Barbara*.

The contrast between *Rosmersholm* and *Major Barbara* suggests why Ibsen's dramas are very often tragedies and Shaw's are, as he himself said, often tragi-comedies. Ibsen is aware of the historical changes in the midst of which his characters exist but seems to regard the world of social struggle as inevitably ethically corrupt and therefore as of less significance than the realm in which men like Rosmer wrestle with permanently insoluble personal dilemmas of loneliness and guilt. Shaw accepts the ethical contradictions of the social struggle. In Barbara Undershaft's words, he believes in "the raising of hell to heaven and of man to God, through the unveiling of an eternal light in the Valley of the Shadow (p. 445)." He can believe this because, as a creative evolutionist, he also believes that the history of life indicates that, if he truly wills it, man can create new social arrangements which will genuinely improve the quality of his existence. Shaw's plays have something of the tragic about them because, as in the moments of Barbara's disillusionment with

the Salvation Army, they invade realms of feeling which are unknown to traditional comedy. They are ultimately comedic because — as in the moment of the final conversion of Barbara and Cusins — they reflect a firm belief that man faces no insoluble dilemmas, that he can will a happier destiny for himself than he has known. Men who see the way can take command of the munitions factory — that is, of the power to destroy ancient injustice and to create a truly human existence.<sup>11</sup>

Both Ibsen and Shaw were, in their different ways, hero-worshippers, given to the portrayal of superior men more or less closely identified with themselves. Halvard Solness of *The Master Builder* and King Magnus of *The Apple Cart* will serve both to illustrate the tendency and the contrasts between the sensibilities of the two dramatists revealed by the way in which they realize it on the stage. In *The Master Builder* we are once again in the realm of the intensely personal problems which dominate *Rosmersholm*. If Rosmer is a man who has understood his vocation and is tragically prevented from carrying it out, Solness is one who, in his pride, has defied his destiny. The man whose vocation it was to be a builder of churches has become the architect of "homes for human beings," tempted by motives which have a ring of humanitarianism but which he knows to be false to his own being. The inevitable result is a burden of guilt — guilt induced by his having wished for the catastrophe which at once destroyed his wife's happiness and established him as a master builder; guilt induced, above all, by his having refused to acknowledge his own nature. Hilda Wangel, his neurotic "princess," wishes him to develop a "robust conscience" of the Viking sort; she wishes him to try to escape the consequences of his tragic error by turning to her. Once more, as he did years before on the church steeple at Lysanger, Solness tries to deny the qualities in himself which make up his destiny — and this time crashes from the tower of his new home to his death.

Shaw's King Magnus has no doubt of his vocation. He has inherited it, he has been trained for it, and he can visualize no other. It is his destiny to attempt to build a state which can contain "homes for human beings." As Solness's preoccupations are intensely subjective, Magnus's are objective — with

<sup>11</sup> For a full discussion of the anti-tragic quality of Shaw's views, see Sylvan Barnet, "Bernard Shaw on Tragedy," *PMLA*, LXXI (1956), 888-99.

the pragmatic strategies by which his subjects, within limits, may be assured the possibility of a good life. His personal affairs are very much in order; the conflicts which he takes seriously are in the political realm. It is true that in *Orinthia* he, like Solness, has his "princess of Orangia," who tempts him to sentimental irresponsibility and denial of his true nature—but she does not tempt him very much. He tells her flatly that she belongs to "fairyland," that he and she are stars which must keep in their particular orbits. Magnus is not given to building "castles in the air." Insofar as there is bitterness in Shaw's portrayal of his hero and his problems it arises from the fact that even the clever and wise philosopher-king must use all of his best talents simply to hold his own against a chaotic parliamentary system of government and the power of entrenched capitalism represented by Breakages, Ltd.

The contrast between Solness and Magnus is, in general, the contrast between Ibsen's and Shaw's heroes. Brand, Julian the Apostate, Rosmer, Borkman and Rubek—all, like Solness, are involved in problems of vocation and guilt. When any of these men are concerned with public affairs, the concern always seems to be a relatively meaningless reflection of their private struggles. Shaw's heroic figures from Julius Caesar to King Charles II (a sequence which includes Cusins, Shotover and Saint Joan) are always engaged in the effort to impose the results of their relatively untroubled private reflections on a world which is to one degree or another unyielding. In their later plays both Ibsen and Shaw seem even more closely identified than before with the exemplary characters they put on the stage. In Ibsen the result is an intensification of tragic feeling. The whole world about Solness, Borkman and Rubek seems filled with the atmosphere of guilt and anxiety which their dilemmas generate. In Shaw there is perhaps an increasing bitterness in the late plays, but it is the bitterness which is summed up in Saint Joan's famous outcry: "O God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?"

The technical differences between *Rosmersholm* and *The Master Builder* on the one hand and *Major Barbara* and *The Apple Cart* on the other are representative of the general differences of this sort between Ibsen's work after the period of the "social dramas" and Shaw's after the turn of the century.

The contrast in technique points, as does the contrast between the earlier plays of the two men, to the basic differences in sensibility between them which have been considered here. Ibsen's method in *Rosmersholm* and *The Master Builder* is still essentially the implicit method, the determined naturalism, of the plays of the period of *A Doll's House*. It is true that in these later plays every word and every act does not bear quite the weight of implication that it bears in the earlier work; the "psychopathology of everyday life" is perhaps a little less in evidence. Furthermore, as has been frequently pointed out, much of the meaning of the plays is conveyed by significant symbols of a sort not so much in evidence in the "social dramas." Nevertheless, the method, with some modification, remains the implicit method of *A Doll's House*. Shaw's technique, beginning with the plays he wrote during the first decade of the twentieth century, including *Major Barbara*, became increasingly explicit. Eric Bentley has pointed out that Shaw's plays are ranged between two poles: "personal" plays, in which the artificial articulateness of the characters is used to express relatively personal motives and responses; and "disquisitory" plays, in which their discussion of the large problems in which they are involved is presented as much for its own sake as for its reflection of entirely personal problems.<sup>12</sup> *Candida* is a personal play, *The Apple Cart* is a largely disquisitory one, and *Major Barbara* stands somewhere between the other two. In general Shaw's tendency after his earliest work was to turn increasingly to the disquisitory. In short, the technical differences between the later plays of Ibsen and Shaw reveals even more clearly than the similar differences between their earlier ones the sharp contrast between their ultimate preoccupations. Ibsen is focused intently on his world of subjective experience; Shaw ranges ever more widely in the realm of the objective social forces which influence his characters.

Seeking to formulate a final statement about the nature and extent of Ibsen's influence on Shaw, we may now turn to Shaw's own remarks on the subject without fear that they will come between us and a concrete view of the plays of the two men. In *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* and elsewhere, Shaw indicates

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Shaw, pp. 118ff.



that the Norwegian influenced him mainly in two ways: (1) as one who set an example of attack on the conventional illusions of contemporary society; (2) as one who brought "discussion" back into the theater. Specific examination of the plays of the two men suggests that there is evidence that Ibsen's "social dramas" helped to fire Shaw to the particular kind of iconoclasm displayed especially in his earliest plays. However, even Ibsen's work of the period of *A Doll's House* frequently has a different focus than Shaw thought; and the tragic main drift of Ibsen's work as a whole Shaw was intellectually predisposed to ignore. Similarly, Shaw may have, with less justification, found the clue to his own conception of discussion drama in the final scene of *A Doll's House* or, say, in the scene in which Rosmer and Rector Kroll exchange liberal and conservative opinions about the nature of man; but on the whole Ibsen's dramatic method is at the opposite pole from Shaw's conception of discussion. Perhaps the soundest general conclusion is Thomas Mann's: that the influence of Ibsen on Shaw is "an interesting demonstration of the extent to which an altogether different temperament can utilize, for its own purposes, like-minded experiences, once they have been fully encompassed; creatively melting them down into something totally new and personal."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup>"He Was Mankind's Friend," *George Bernard Shaw: A Critical Survey*, ed. Louis Kronenberger (Cleveland, Ohio, 1953), p. 253.

# SIR JOHN FALSTAFF: COMIC HERO<sup>1</sup>

by

Rufus Putney

"I admire him [Jonson], but I love Shakespeare." In those words Dryden epitomized the kind of dilemma we always find ourselves in when intellect and emotions are at odds, as they are for most of us as a result of Shakespeare's characterizations of Hal and Falstaff. Admiration is all we can afford the Prince, but Shakespeare has given us "medicines" that make us love Sir John. We accept intellectually the necessity for Hal's rejection of him, but our hearts, "fracted and corroborate," lie strewn in pieces, and all the argumentation, explication, and special pleading of Messrs. Stoll, Dover Wilson, Tillyard, Traversi, Spivack, and the other anti-Bradleyans cannot put our hearts together again. We may agree that we ought to cure love with counsel, as Glaucé urged Britomart to do, but Glaucé, more realistic than these scholars and critics, added that should counsel fail, they would get Britomart her man. And most of us still want Falstaff "wheresom'er he is,"

<sup>1</sup>Read to the Central Renaissance Conference, St. Louis University, March, 1958, with the subtitle, "or the Rejection of Bradley." The attack on the opinions A. C. Bradley stated in 1902 in his famous lecture, "The Rejection of Falstaff," have been increasing in vigor since J. Dover Wilson published *The Fortunes of Falstaff* (Cambridge, Eng., 1943). In 1952, Professor Samuel Hemingway, the editor of the New Variorum Edition of *Henry IV, Part I*, and therefore the man most likely to know, stated that in the twenty years past some two hundred scholars had written on Falstaff. "Is," he asked, "a harmony of the Gospels concerning Falstaff impossible — the Gospel according to Margann and Bradley, the Gospel according to Stoll, and the newer (and less consistent) Gospel according to Dover Wilson?" (SQ, III (1952), 307). The Gospel according to Stoll remains through its innumerable restatements essentially the belief that our response to Falstaff must be tinged by the contempt we feel for the conventional *miles gloriosus*. The Gospel according to Dover Wilson degrades Falstaff into a reincarnation of the Tudor Morality figure Riot in Part I, and Vanity in Part II. Wilson's views have gained wider currency by their appearance in E. M. W. Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays* (New York, 1949) and Derek Traversi's *Shakespeare, from Richard II to Henry V* (Stanford University Press, 1957). The excesses to which this Gospel can lead are illustrated in Bernard Spivack's "Falstaff and the Psychomachia," SQ, VIII (1957), 450-59. John Palmer's analysis of the plays in his *Political Characters of Shakespeare* (London, 1945) yields results comparable to Bradley's view that Falstaff wins our love, but that Hal, because he is incapable of loving anyone except his father, gains only our respect. It should be added, without questioning the Prince's affection for his father, that Shakespeare presented them together chiefly in scenes where the Prince is angrily denying the King's false accusations. Palmer (p. 186) even accused Hal of "invincible priggery."

whether in heaven or in hell or in Arthur's bosom. Bradley's "The Rejection of Falstaff" cannot be argued into oblivion because it continues to reflect our real feelings, and one cannot reason emotion away. Feeling, as Shaw so often told us, is the basis for thought rather than thought for feeling. The anti-Bradleyans have chosen the even paler cast of erudition.

It is most disheartening to be afflicted with an insight into the dramatic nature of Falstaff and then to re-read Bradley. You inevitably find that he had the affliction first. That is one facet of the greatness of his lecture. He not only expressed our love for Falstaff with unmatched eloquence and spoke of Hal sanely and with rare understanding, but he also foresaw the attacks of his opponents and defeated them before they were made. In attempting to demolish him with fresh learning, Professors Stoll, Dover Wilson, Tillyard, and Spivack are attacking a tank with pop-guns. Because Bradley anticipated everything truly relevant to the dramatic characters of Hal and Falstaff, I shall be merely stating more explicitly some of the implications of his lecture in asserting that Shakespeare embedded in the political matrix of each part of *Henry IV* a real comic plot and that he presented Sir John Falstaff as a true comic hero.

To call Falstaff a comic hero implies that he is more than a humorous figure carried along to provide occasional fun. It means that he belongs to a species of dramatic character that exists on every plane from farce to high comedy. Because the real peers of the exuberant and titanic Falstaff of Part I, who must represent Shakespeare's original conception, are limited to Hotspur and the supermen of Shakespeare's tragedies, we must conclude that he was conceived like them as a poetic character in the sense so luminously expounded by Lascelles Abercrombie in 1912 in his essay, "The Function of Poetry in Drama:"

We must be clear then that a poetic play is not a play that might have been written in prose, but happens to be written in poetry.... No; the kind of play I mean is one in which you feel that the characters themselves *are* poetry, and were poetry before they began to speak poetry: it would be a wrench for them not so to utter themselves. They are characters which, compared with ours, have undergone a certain powerful simplification and exaggeration, so that the primary impulses of being are infinitely more evident in what they do and say than in the speech and action of actuality's

affairs. This does not prevent them, of course, from being studies of deep and subtle individual psychology (if the poet's preferences lie that way): But as the confusion of forces which make up the impulsion of ordinary life has in these characters been simplified to a firm arrangement of conflict, an orderly disorder, . . . so also the language which is in their mouths has been simplified out of the grey complexity of ordinary speech into an ordered medley of colour, and every word they use is required to have the intense unobstructed significance which words can only have in poetry; the half-felt allusiveness, the dulled metaphor, of common talking, become image, metaphor, and simile unashamed and rejoicing.<sup>2</sup>

But if Falstaff is such a character, he belongs to the select circle that includes the finest comic heroes of Ben Jonson and Molière. A few generalizations can be made concerning the heroes of such high or poetic comedies as Jonson and Molière sometimes wrote. First, they are protagonists in comic plots that have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Second, the comic hero must be defeated in this sort of play in his effort to achieve inappropriate goals; or, if the goals themselves are humanly acceptable, the means he uses to attain them must make him undeserving of success. Furthermore, he surpasses, as does the tragic hero, intellectually and sometimes morally the world in which he exists. This superiority invites our admiration. Thus we prefer Volpone and Mosca to Voltore, Corvino, and Corbaccio, or Subtle, Doll, and Face to the sordid or silly gulls of *The Alchemist*. Sir Epicure Mammon, Jonson's most Shakespearean character, is really the hero of his own comic counterplot. Our response to these figures, who are rarely such execrable rascals as Tartuffe, is usually a series of alternating attractions and repulsions, similar to our moments of identification with and withdrawal from the tragic hero. We are delighted by their skill and brilliant wit, alienated by their callousness and depravity.

That Shakespeare created Falstaff in accordance with this method of constructing a comic hero seems to me implied in a passage near the close of Bradley's lecture, where he said:

Falstaff, though his humour scarcely flags to the end, exhibits more and more of his seamy side. This is nowhere turned to full light in Part I.; but in Part II. we see him as the heartless destroyer of Mrs. Quickly, as a ruffian seriously defying the Lord Chief Justice because his position as

<sup>2</sup>Reprinted in *English Critical Essays, Twentieth Century*, ed. Phyllis M. Jones, World's Classics (Oxford, 1933), pp. 253-54.

an officer on service gives him power to do wrong, as the pike preparing to snap up the poor old dace Shallow, and (this is the one scene where he and Henry meet) as the worn-out lecher, not laughing at his servitude to the flesh but sunk in it. Finally, immediately before the rejection, the world where he is king is exposed in all its sordid criminality when we find Mrs. Quickly and Doll arrested for being concerned in the death of one man, if not more, beaten to death by their bullies; and the dangerousness of Falstaff is emphasised in his last words as he hurries from Shallow's house to London, words at first touched with humour but at bottom only too seriously meant: 'Let us take any man's horses; the laws of England are at my commandment. Happy are they which have been my friends, and woe unto my Lord Chief Justice.' His dismissal to the Fleet by the Chief Justice is the dramatic vengeance for that threat.

Yet all these excellent devices fail. They cause us momentary embarrassment at times when repellent traits in Falstaff's character are disclosed; but they fail to change our attitude of humour into one of seriousness, and our sympathy into repulsion.<sup>3</sup>

Bradley was here suggesting that Shakespeare tried to treat Falstaff in the manner of a comic hero, but that the attempt failed because we can never forget the stupendous comedian of *I Henry IV* or gain the objectivity we would need to dismiss him. Nor could Shakespeare, who would not, Bradley continued, strip Falstaff of his humor. The Epilogue promised more "fat meat" in *Henry V*, and when Shakespeare decided that Sir John must die, he killed him with humor and compassion.

Everyone has observed the difference between Falstaff as he appears in the First and Second Parts of *Henry IV*. There are, surely, more dramatic reasons for the change than those usually given. Whatever Shakespeare may have been careless about, he seems always to have been aware of the organic unity of his plays and of the necessity for peopling them with matching characters who cannot be transposed into other groupings. That is true of *Henry IV*. The original Falstaff was conceived to exist in a play that contained Hotspur. There the rascal and the rebel can both be lovable because one counterpoises the other. They are also contrastingly matched in verbal brilliance, to an extent that makes it tempting to believe that Shakespeare turned from one to the other in the creation of his play, writing in a state of triumphant excitement

<sup>3</sup>*Oxford Lectures on Poetry* (London, 1909), p. 272.

and spurred to new splendors by the dialogue he was achieving for each of these eloquent speakers. In Part II we have as much of Falstaff as could be presented without his heroic foil. Now the Lord Chief Justice is contrasted with him, and, with the Prince no longer his companion, there was little stimulus to those Herculean efforts of imagination that the competition between Falstaff and Hotspur had excited. Furthermore, with Hotspur dead, history provided neither the persons nor the events Shakespeare would have needed for a second heroic-comic history play, even had he been willing to do here what he did nowhere else, cut a second play to the same pattern he had formerly used. Consequently, *II Henry IV* represents a new conception; it is essentially a realistic comedy in an historical setting, and Falstaff had clearly to be revamped to fit such a play.

If Falstaff in Part I is subjected to less intense comic scrutiny, he is, nonetheless, developed as a comic hero. His purpose here as later is to make himself Hal's favorite and thereby to become the power behind the throne, the greatest and most influential man in the kingdom. Not, of course, out of any lust for power, but because that seems the most likely path to the superabundant life. That goal is not in itself offensive, but only Falstaff's most unthinking lovers could approve his gaining it by the corruption of the King and the subversion of the laws of the realm. From the outset his inversion of morality is apparent in his humorous remonstrances to the Prince:

Marry, then, sweet wag, when thou art king, let not us that are squires of the night's body be called thieves of the day's beauty. . . . But I prithee, sweet wag, shall there be gallows standing in England when thou art king, and resolution thus fobb'd as it is with the rusty curb of old father antic the law? Do not thou, when thou art king, hang a thief.

(I, ii)

Moral scruples evaporate in the laughter and delight Falstaff brings us. We accept with pleasure his hilarious, Calvinistic justification of his profession of highwayman: "Why, Hal, 'tis my vocation, Hal. 'Tis no sin for a man to labour in his vocation." Only the critical brethren of Malvolio can worry over Falstaff's flight from Gadshill, or the monumental lies he overwhelms us with in the first tavern scene. All who can

rejoice in cakes and ale forgive such venial sins as falsehood and cowardice, in literature and in life, to bringers of great joy. The one real error of Bradley and Maurice Morgann was the attempt to stuff Falstaff with the courage he lacks. It is sufficient that Shakespeare did not in the text of the play subject him to the kind of contemptuous ridicule Jonson used to deflate Bobadill. Only the dourest moralists can feel any serious alienation until the second tavern scene. Then his false accusations against the Hostess and his slandering of the Prince must lead to some lessening of our sympathy, although the scene closes on such a happy note of mock-heroism and humorous self-pity that warm relations are restored. Similarly, the damaging effects of his damnable use of the King's press are cancelled by the brilliant and terrible wit of his defense of his soldiers: "Tut, tut; good enough to toss; food for powder, food for powder; they'll fill a pit as well as better. Tush, man, mortal men, mortal men."

The second tavern scene is the mid-point of the comic plot. There Falstaff's wit extricates him from the immediate consequences of his slanders, but even such slim chances for success as Hal's earlier soliloquy left him are dimmed. Shrewsbury defeats him with the Prince and estranges the audience. Only arm-chair soldiers will censure his speech on honor, begrudge him the contents of his pistol-case, or blame his counterfeiting death to save his life. In all these instances Falstaff is no more cowardly or contemptible than the average man who goes to the unavoidable battle wishing it were "bed-time and all well." But no one who has been duly responsive to Hotspur's gallantry can wholly forgive the grossness of Falstaff's mutilation of Hotspur's body. Certainly the act wins only the contempt of the Prince and is sufficient preparation and final motive for the rejection of Falstaff. We shall never know whether from the first Shakespeare planned the two parts of *Henry IV*, or whether the second was exacted by the popularity of the first. What is certain is that after Shrewsbury *Henry V* could have begun with Hal's coronation and Falstaff's dismissal.

If the clouds of glory Falstaff trails through *II Henry IV* become increasingly bedraggled, he remains most splendidly arrayed in his brilliant wit. He also continues, as a comic hero should, to keep our loyalty by excelling most of the characters with whom he is associated. He towers, of course,

over Mrs. Quickly, Doll Tearsheet, Pistol, Peto, Bardolph, Poins, Master Silence, and Justice Slender, but what does most to maintain his impressiveness is his real moral superiority to Lord John of Lancaster. Most of us are sufficiently amoral to prefer him to the Lord Chief Justice; yet even while we rejoice at his triumphs, we must be appalled at his unfitness to be, as he desires, the real ruler of England.

Still, Bradley was right in saying that in the Falstaff scenes Shakespeare overshot his mark, as he seems to have done also with Shylock and Malvolio, two other comic heroes who have struck many with their pathos. Hal may, but neither we nor Shakespeare can banish "sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant, being as he is old Jack Falstaff." We know that every adjective save "old" is untrue, but we believe them anyway. We cannot forswear the company of so delightful a rogue. Consequently, this effort to explain Falstaff as a comic hero must be tainted with the same quality of irrelevance that invalidates all attempts to explain away the dilemma created by our coolness towards Hal and our warm feelings for Falstaff. We can never know, as Lascelles Abercrombie reminded us in his *Plea for the Liberty of Interpreting*, what Shakespeare's intentions were. We can only say what we find. But it is important that we do find that Shakespeare loved Falstaff, as did, for all the trust Dover Wilson puts in him, the pious Samuel Johnson, who could in real life love that literally lousy rake, Topham Beauclerk. We cannot tell whom Stoll, Wilson, Tillyard, Traversi, and Spivack love in real life, but they have ceased to love Falstaff, as Shakespeare did not. The account of Falstaff's death, written with such real tenderness, was the work of a loving creator rather than a censorious playwright. And, surely, it was better that Falstaff should die, as he had lived, at ease in his inn than travel to France to fatten the gallows on which the austere young King hanged Bardolph and Nym, even if there were room for Falstaff in a play where Hal must be pre-eminent in the comedy as well as the political hero. Falstaff is far safer in Arthur's bosom than in the army of Henry V. The army is also safer without Falstaff.



## PROTEAN PULCINELLA

by

John V. Falconieri

It is well known that, soon after the formation of the theatrical companies of the Commedia dell'Arte, these companies crossed the Alps and presented their plays to every nation of the occidental world. Time and the host countries influenced the characters or masks, effecting certain transformations. Of all the masks none took on as many forms and underwent as many metamorphoses as that of Pulcinella.

When and how Pulcinella was born is not known with certainty. His origins are still being discussed and the polemics are ample. Generally, the polemicists are divided into two groups: the "antiquarians", who look to antiquity for the origins of the mask, and the "modernists", who insist that the sources of this mask are found in the last years of the 16th century among contemporary comic types. The principal supporter of the ancient origin hypothesis is Albrecht Dieterich,<sup>1</sup> who deduces, through a study of the frescoes of Pompei and of Greek comic types, a classical source not only for Pulcinella but for all the Commedia dell'Arte masks. Notwithstanding, Benedetto Croce<sup>2</sup> denies Dieterich's theory categorically, and supports the more acceptable hypothesis that Pulcinella was introduced as a theatrical personage during the last decades of the 16th century by Silvio Fiorillo (who portrayed the mask of Capitano Mattamoros), and that it was derived from an existing comic type of the popular theatre.

Until this problem is resolved it can be stated, without fear of contradiction, that Pulcinella appears for the first time in written and graphic documents in 1618. A document of that year tells us that "Andrea Calcese, don Policinella will recite"; and in that same year there appeared the now famous

<sup>1</sup>*Pulcinella, pompejanische Wandbilder und römische Satyrspiele*, Leipsig, 1897.

<sup>2</sup>*Pulcinella e il personaggio napoletano in commedia*, Roma, 1899. Extracted from *Archivio storico per le provincie napoletane*, Vol. XXIII, 1898.

designs made of bird feathers by Dionisio Minaggio.<sup>3</sup> Shortly after (1622) Giacomo Callot's ingenious *Balli di Sfessania* appear. In these drawings Pulcinella is a large man who wears a long white shirt tied to his waist; his flabby trousers, also white, fall multi-pleated to his shoes and his hat which flaps over his ears is equally flabby. The outfit resembles the dress of the contemporary Campanian peasant. His nose is not overly hooked. From this type many develop and before long he is wearing the black half mask which covers the upper part of his face, and his nose is invariably large and hooked. The hat, no longer flabby, becomes more rigid and begins to take the form of a cone. In the 18th century, Tiepolo's Pulcinellas have rigid cone-like hats, long shirts with immense buttons in front, and they are somewhat hunched and paunchy. Only the half mask remains constant.

His character does not necessarily represent but rather symbolizes the rustic peasant, not too intelligent but quite crafty. With time he assumes many attitudes and aspects. At one time he approaches the personage of the Captain by becoming the braggart who flees from the slightest sign of danger. His most frequent role is that of servant in which he is boastful and cowardly, insolent, shameless, vulgar in language and gluttonous. To demonstrate his versatility, he has had roles of baker, innkeeper, caretaker, gardener, jailer, student, merchant, painter, thief, soldier, etc., but regardless of role he is always the scoundrel, the sluggard, the shirker, the loafer.

Only in the last century, was he, in a manner of speaking, rehabilitated by Antonio Petito,<sup>4</sup> the famous Pulcinella, who transformed him into a "good husband, an honest worker, generous, even courageous, spirited, not servile, not evil, unselfish, witty, not awkward in love, keen observer and an intelligent citizen."<sup>5</sup>

But long before this change in character, Pulcinella had become very famous not only as a theatrical mask, but as a carnival mask and above all as a puppet. He crossed the Alps

<sup>3</sup>Surprisingly enough the originals are in the possession of McGill University of Canada.

<sup>4</sup>A good account of this actor is found in H. Lyonnet, *Pulcinella et compagnie (Le théâtre napolitain)*, Paris, 1901.

<sup>5</sup>Cited from A. G. Bragaglia, *Pulcinella*, Roma, 1953 which is the latest and most complete history of Pulcinella, his portrayals and his plays.



Earliest known drawing of an Italian  
Pulcinella by Minaggio (1618)



French Polichinelle



Prehauser — Famous Austrian  
Pulcinella



English Punch

in all these forms and there his name was gallicized to Polichinelle.

Many types of Pulcinella invaded France during the 17th century and many Frenchmen adapted the mask to their use. Molière introduced a Pulcinella in the *intermezzo* of the first act of *Le malade imaginaire*, and the mask appeared with great frequency in the Comédie Italienne. Michelangelo Francanzani, the Neapolitan Pulcinella, was made famous by Watteau. Already in Francanzani's time, at the close of the 17th century, the French figure was becoming stylized and fixed. The paunch and hunch were quite exaggerated, the buttons in front were large, and the conical hat had become more cylindrical. It is quite possible that the French mask was derived from other than the original type for there were many variations in Italy and even Naples.

There arrived a moment in the history of the French theater when the authorities denied freedom of oral expression to public performers with the exception of the Comédie Française. Even puppets were muted except that they might speak with or through their special whistles. Later in 1697 when the theaters were closed and the Italians expelled from the stage, the puppets, with only their whistles, were left to confront the monopoly of the Comédie Française. This contributed a great deal to the popularity of puppetry especially among the populace who saw them at the fairs.

At the beginning of the 18th century Polichinelle took a wife, Jacqueline, and a dog, Gobe-mouche. Other characters that were never missing from the puppeteers' storehouse were the commissioner, the gendarme, the hangman and the devil. Polichinelle did not wear a mask, his costume was of many bright colors, and he was never without his stick. He argued with everyone even with his cat and dog and never lost the occasion to let fly his cudgel, bringing it down on everyone's head especially his wife's. And so he spent his life, maltreating everyone and at times even reaching the point of homicide. He is a lover of free living, drinker and drunkard, a Don Juan, a boaster, a provoker, profane in language, shameless, and seems to have had the mission of materializing vices inherent in mankind. Only when he gets older, in the 19th century does he improve somewhat. As he becomes a bourgeois he becomes less evil, less uncouth and less sensual.

Beyond this difference in costume and character between

Pulcinella and Polichinelle, one must note that in France the puppet was more popular than his human counterpart and it is in the form of a puppet that Polichinelle embarks for England.<sup>6</sup>

Having spent more than 20 years in France, Polichinelle preferred to wait for the fall of the Puritans and the death of Cromwell before going to England. In fact, one might say that the sly Pulcinella went to England with Charles II in 1660 at the time of the Restoration because the first document touching upon our buffoon dates from 1662 when the same Charles II presents "signor Bologna, alias Pollicinella" with a gold medal. As time goes by the Italian mask and puppet becomes more popular and begins to assume these names: Pollicinella, Polichinelli, Puntionella, Polichinello, Punchinanella and Punchinello which soon is shortened to Punch.

The first Punch resembled Polichinelle a good deal. He was short and stocky, his nose not too crooked, dressed in brilliant colors and had hump and paunch. With the passing of time his face takes on a cruel and fierce expression, his nose becomes larger and more beaked, his chin grows upward and hooked approaching the nose together with which it resembles a pincers. This evil face harmonizes with his change in character. Punch becomes so cruel, that in addition to beating his wife, Judy, he is fond of throwing his own child out the window. When the police come to arrest him, he kills them; the judge comes and condemns him to death, but Punch manages to decapitate him; he is led to the gallows but instead of being hanged, Punch hangs the hangman; and when the Devil comes to take him to the nether world, it is Punch who sends the Devil back home after giving him a sound beating.

We might take note here of how Punch has diverged from the original Neapolitan Pulcinella. Although the latter scorned everything and everyone he maintained an intimate ethic sense. He would not have dreamed of beating his wife and had he thrown his child out the window certainly the spectators would have burned both him and his shack. Despite this, Punch continues his generic role of political satirist, censor of customs and parodist extraordinaire.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>For the study of puppetry in France and Europe see C. Magnin, *Histoire des marionnettes en Europe*, Paris, 1862 and Yorick (Pietro Ferrigni), *La storia dei burattini*, Firenze, 1884. The latter has been translated into English and appeared in *The Mask* in a series beginning with Vol. V, No. 2, Oct. 1912.

<sup>7</sup>Two outstanding books on Punch are John P. Stead, *Mr. Punch*, London, 1950 and George Speaight, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, New York, 1955.

The story of Pulcinella in Spain has yet to be written, but through sources that come to us indirectly we can ascertain the presence of this personage and even formulate certain hypotheses upon which a historical structure might at least be begun.

The Italian companies of the Commedia dell'Arte flourished in Spain during the last half of the 16th century but Pulcinella was not part of these companies for he had not developed as a theatrical figure as yet.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile many Italian puppeteers had gone to Spain but seem to have been the technicians, the mechanics and artists of the puppet stage but the subject matter of puppet shows revolved not around the masked comedy but around adventures of love, of chivalry and of struggles against the Moors.

The 17th century can be disregarded because no source has been discovered indicating the presence of Italian masks either human or puppet. And this is not surprising considering the fervent religious spirit of the Counterreformation in the Iberian peninsula which could not admit a vital theater such as were the masks.

With the end of the 17th century and the end of Hapsburg rule, it would not be improper to assume that Pulcinella comes to Spain by way of France once the Bourbons install themselves on the Spanish throne. It is not known how or when he was baptized with the pompous name of Don Cristóbal Polichinela. This Polichinela must have always been a puppet because to this day 'polichinela' is one of the words for puppet, and which also indicates that the word has passed to a generic form. As an extension of the name Don Cristóbal Polichinela, the puppet also took the name of El tío Cristóbal and even Cristobita.<sup>9</sup>

His character resembles that of Polichinelle and Punch. He is fearless, argumentative, given to thuggery, a drunkard and always the Don Juan. He uses his stick on the slightest provocation. The plot of the farce is almost identical to that of Punch in which he beats or kills everyone and when the Devil comes to take him away, Don Cristobal impales him on his own trident.

<sup>8</sup>See John V. Falconieri, *Una historia de la Commedia dell'Arte en España*, Madrid, 1957.

<sup>9</sup>See Santiago Montoto y Rautenstrauch, *Personajes, personas y personillas que corren por las tierras de ambas Castillas*, 2a. ed., Sevilla, 1921, I, pp. 218-219.

In Spanish the expression "Más valiente que Cristobita" (Braver than Cristobita) has remained, derived undoubtedly from the temerarious actions of the puppet. In modern times Jacinto Benavente has written two plays whose characters are modelled after the Commedia dell'Arte masks including Pulcinella and his wife. In one of these, *Los intereses creados*, Polichinela masquerades as a rich highclass bourgeois but Crispín, a cunning Brighella type, recognizes him as an old colleague who had served time in the galleys with him, and imposes his will upon him by blackmail. When Crispín recalls to Polichinela the latter's iniquitous past he declares that he had not been deceived by "esos alegres colores con que ocultáis al mundo vuestras jorobas." (those gay colors with which you hide your humps from the world). Later Polichinela's wife, referring to her husband, says to a friend: "No lo sabéis que algunas veces llegó hasta golpearme." (Don't you know that on occasion he has even beaten me.) Therefore, the image of the French puppet, in both dress and character, persists; naturally, the humps and costume are used symbolically.

The countries of the North do not resist the invasion of the Italian Pulcinella. Documents reveal the presence of the comedians and puppets everywhere; and those who most influenced the theater of German speaking countries were Harlequin and Pulcinella. There were Pulcinellas or Polzinellas in Nuremberg, Frankfort, Berlin, Dresden, Munich, Danzig, Vienna, Salzburg, Leipzig and in Holland. Besides the Italian companies there were German puppeteers who presented their Pulcinellesque farces prior to selling their merchandise. Among the more famous German puppeteers was Johan Hilverding whose itineraries included cities in Germany, Austria Czechoslovakia and Sweden where he sold binoculars and eyeglasses.<sup>10</sup>

The Germanic transformation of Pulcinella is due to the efforts of the Austrian play director Stranitsky who created the personage of Hanswurst. The name itself may be a precise translation of the very common stage name of the *zanni* called Zan Salcizza. The Austrian Hanswurst is a fusion of Pulcinella, Harlequin and possesses many traits of the Austrian peasant.

<sup>10</sup>See Johannes E. Rabe, *Kasper Putschenelle*, Hamburg, 1912 and Johannes Bolte, *Das Danziger Theater im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert*, Hamburg, 1895.

Characteristic are his suspenders, the manner of wearing his hair and several color adornments of his shirt or blouse. Insofar as the costume is concerned it approaches that of the Venetian Pulcinella rather than the Neapolitan. He wears the conical hat instead of the flabby and in time loses his mask but never his stick which remains always at his side in the manner of Harlequin.

Stranitsky's desire was to have this creation of his approximate the national figure of the Salzburg peasant and in effect, Hanswurst succeeds in becoming the most important comic type in all the territory of German speech. The character of Hanswurst is analogous to that of the original type of the rustic servant always uncouth yet canny, good natured and entertaining whose comicity stems from his ingenuous nature rather than the biting parody of later years.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the principal countries we know that Pulcinella visited Brussels under the name Poechenelle and it may be that the Flemish Woltje is Pulcinella transformed.<sup>12</sup> We know that in the 18th century he went to Russia, to St. Petersburg, and the question of the possible derivation of Petruska from Pulcinella, through a famous Italian comedian, dancer and singer, Pietro Mior called Petrillo, is still being discussed. We know of his sojourns in Bohemia, Sweden, Poland and there are indications of his presence in Portugal and Yugoslavia. And although our Pulcinella may not have traveled to the Orient, he has had, nonetheless, some influence on Japanese art. There are two plates (property of the Dutch East Indies Co.) wrought, one must imagine, by some Japanese traveler. One plate has a drawing of Harlequin and the other a Pulcinella complete with paunch and hunch, and a little Japanese face.<sup>13</sup> In depicting him as a Japanese this traveler has made Pulcinella one of his own; he has also nationalized him!

We have come to an end of the long peregrinations of our comedian and puppet. Wherever he went, from London to Prague, from Seville to St. Petersburg, this fearless and extraordinary traveler left behind his imprint. What vital substance did this buffoon possess to have fascinated half a world and to have subsisted for three centuries and a half?

<sup>11</sup>The most outstanding work on the Commedia dell'Arte in Germany is found in Otto Rommel, *Die Altwiener Volkskomödie*, Vienna, 1952.

<sup>12</sup>See Ernest Maindron, *Marionnettes et guignols*, Paris, 1900.

<sup>13</sup>These plates can be seen in Pierre L. Duchartre, *La comédie italienne*, Paris, 1925.



Pulcinella is a conglomerate of personages born of a common substratum. Every nation changed his costume and his character in keeping with that nation's traditions, history, and aesthetic sense, but his original essence always remained. This essence, in which resides his irresistibility, is that spirit of rebellion against rules and respectability, against commonplace courage and everyday justice — all the *conventional* virtues. Because something in the intimacy of his heart tells him that were he to accept these conventions, he would have to accept the other conventions of men and nations: hunger, pestilence, sickness, causality, wars, etc. which outrage the body and the spirit. His nefarious nature must not be taken too literally; his poetic essence must not be confused with the reality in which he operates. The defenstration of the child is simply an overt expression of unfettered individuality. Who would not like to see a hangman hanged? a judge brought to justice? a thief robbed? Who does not understand man's occasional rebellion against the gods? (the core of Greek tragedy and a theme as ancient as man).

This Pulcinella essence is common to buffoons, poets, and bona fide humanists who reject the idea of converting man into a machine, of compelling him to obey national laws and even the laws of nature, of transforming him into an ant or bee, of depriving him of that sense of spiritual liberty that every man nurtures in his soul.

FORREST AND MACREADY:  
A NOTE ON CONTRAST

by

James T. Nardin

Early in 1955, I found in the Harvard Theatre Collection three promptbooks of a five-act, blank-verse play by John Banim, called *Damon and Pythias*. To a twentieth-century audience, the piece is simply another of the pretentiously bad verse plays of the romantic tradition. But certain circumstances surrounding these promptbooks give the play more significance to us than it would have on its own intrinsic worth. For though these promptbooks may give little other reward, they do indicate some of the differences in playing styles between the famous pair of feuding actors of the nineteenth century, William Charles Macready and Edwin Forrest.

However bad this play may seem today, it was a play taken seriously in its own day, both in England and America. The author gave it superficial characteristics which make it resemble the tradition of Shakespeare and his verse-dramatist successors — complex plot, large numbers of characters and subplots, high sententiousness, and lofty moral tone; moreover, he called it a tragedy, even though it obviously is not.

Actors apparently took it seriously too, for Macready, Forrest, the Davenports, and the Wallacks appeared in it regularly and played it either as an individual benefit for themselves or grouped it in a prestige repertory that might include such plays as *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The School for Scandal*.

Furthermore, the format of the promptbooks indicates something of the prestige the play had in its own day. Two of the promptbooks belong to an 1821 edition, issued in a format far more expensive and elaborate than that of most plays of the period, and dedicated to William Charles Macready. The third copy is of an American 1860 edition, in a less impressive format, but issued as part of a series of Shakespearean plays edited by and dedicated to Edwin Forrest. The dedication

is absurd, but bears examination for the indication of the nineteenth-century importance of the play:

The Publishers believing that the want of a strictly correct edition of the Plays of Shakspeare, as they are acted at the present day, which might serve the purpose of mentor and guide has long been felt by the public, and particularly by the members of the theatrical profession, have endeavored to supply the want, and present this work as the first result of their efforts. It is

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED  
TO  
EDWIN FORREST, ESQ.

as an humble tribute to the genius of the greatest impersonator and expounder living, of the works of the immortal bard, and a recognition of kindly assistance received from him. In making the corrections and interpolations (from the original text) his knowledge and research were invaluable; and the unusual facility afforded by his private library (the finest Shakspearian in the world) have enabled the Publishers to perfect a work which they can present with confidence to the public.

Since the title page calls this "No. 6 of the Edwin Forrest Edition of Shakspearian and other Plays" and since the verso of the dedication page gives an account of John Banim, the Irish author of the play, it seems obvious that this dedication is erroneously repeated in this volume from the earlier plays. But the inclusion of this play in so pompously and pretentiously dedicated a series does suggest that the play was considered one of dignified worth.

As a consequence, the play takes on an added interest when we discover that there are fairly extensive prompter's notes on the performances of several of the leading actors of the day, in particular those of Macready and Forrest.

The Forrest copy (HTC TS 2142.100) is of the 1821 London edition, published by John Warren, dedicated to Macready. This copy bears the signature of John Moore, as do many of the promptbooks in the Harvard Theatre Collection. Moore was an actor, stage manager, and prompter in major New York theatres for nearly half a century after he came from England about the middle of the nineteenth century. The major portion of the prompter's notes in this text give an indication that they follow Forrest's performance, there are additional notes, sometimes in other handwriting, about performances by the Davenports and the Wallacks.

The Macready copy (HTC TS 2142.101) is a second printing of the same edition. It has some slight alterations, not textually significant, to correct false imposition, to correct transposition of page numbers, and to create a better layout of the title page. This copy bears the signature of W. C. Macready at intervals throughout the text and notes on his performance of the play.

The third copy (HTC TS 2142.105) is of the American 1860 edition, published by W. A. Moore and C. S. Bernard. This one bears the signature of Barton Hill, an actor who appeared in the play with Forrest in the closing period of Forrest's life. Since he was, as the critics attested, an inferior actor, he apparently put down slavishly the details of Forrest's performance, possibly in the hope that he might later be able to duplicate the performance from such notes.

Hill's copy further corroborates the reliability of the first copy as giving notes on Forrest's actual performance. For several of the cuts indicated in the earlier text are made in the printed version edited by Forrest in this later edition, and most of Hill's notes on performance are slightly more elaborate and detailed notations of the same things noted more briefly in the Moore promptbook as done by Forrest.

What we have, therefore, is of interest for an indication of some of the differences in the way these two men — Forrest and Macready — performed the same play. Since this was a new play without a long acting tradition behind it such as a Shakespearean play might have, their notes show also how they handled a play when left entirely to their own contrivances. Furthermore, since this play was considered important, these men may well be expected to have given more than ordinary attention to what they thought seemed the appropriate production.

To see the contrast in the two men's treatment of the play, one needs at least a brief sketch of the complex plot. Damon defies Dionysius, the newly chosen tyrant of Syracuse, and is saved from violent and sudden death only by the arrival of his devoted friend Pythias. Both Damon and Pythias are pictured as ideal romantic heroes. Damon is married to a devoted wife, Hermion, but he wishes her not to know the danger he is

in; furthermore, his love is never allowed to interfere with his devotion to the cause of liberty. Pythias, on the other hand, is about to be married and can talk of little except his joy at his approaching marriage; yet love must be bypassed when devotion to his friend Damon is called for.

In the early part of the play, scenes between Pythias and his bride, Calanthe, alternate with scenes between Damon and his enemy Dionysius. Finally Damon is seized and imprisoned. Word of this disaster reaches Pythias as he is at the altar; without hesitation, Pythias walks out of the wedding to go to Damon's aid; with self-sacrificing devotion, Pythias takes Damon's place in prison for six hours so that Damon may go to say farewell to his wife and child.

During Damon's absence, the treacherous Dionysius puts on a disguise and does his best to make all his adversaries unhappy and mistrustful of one another. He goes to Pythias's bride and persuades her that Damon is false and will not return, then offers to help Pythias escape. Still in disguise, he warns Pythias of the treachery of Dionysius. But despite all the pressure from his bride, and from his father, Nicias—a character added for pure pathos—Pythias stays faithfully in prison.

Meanwhile, back at the country estate, Damon's plight is not good. His ex-slave (freed by Damon as evidence of Damon's devotion to the cause of liberty) slays Damon's horse in a misguided effort to keep Damon from returning to die. But honor finds a way. Finally, with Pythias already mounted on the scaffold to die in the place of Damon, Damon rushes in and assumes his rightful place. Dionysius casts off his disguise and pardons Damon, now that he has learned what true honor is. The play ends in a series of reunions of wives and husbands and children amid great sententious pronouncements. Only one note mars the sentimental joy of the finish; word is brought to Pythias amidst all these reunions that his father has died in grief at the thought of his son's inevitable death. But such a note is all but lost in the mass joy of the ending.

With the narrow escapes, the split-second timing, overdrawn pathos, and miraculous ending, this is unmistakably melodrama. Certainly it is not tragedy, as the author said it was, for everyone but Pythias's father (Nicias) survives the play and emerges in happiness.

show how they thought a play should be performed. The general difference between the two acting versions suggests that Macready represents more nearly the tragic tradition of the period, for he made fewer cuts, fewer changes, and emphasized the pageantry, dignity, and stateliness he found in the play; Forrest, on the other hand, seems the more modern in his approach, for he shows by his cuts, shifts of scenes, and emphasis on rapid motion rather than on the poetry that he considered it melodrama, as today's audience would.

Both men seem to have been fond of formality and pageantry, but even in this respect they differ. The sketches of the senate-house sets indicate a formal balance in both the Forrest and Macready versions. But where the sketches for the sets vary, Forrest's sketches show a tendency to unbalance the stage in favor of action, much as modern sets often do. For example, in the last act, Macready's set shows the scaffold downstage right, squarely at right angles to the proscenium; Forrest's set shows the scaffold slightly upstage and turned on the oblique, where it has a more commanding position for the action which is to occur there.

The most significant change of all is that the wedding scene — sketched in full detail of formal balanced pageantry in the Macready version — is cut out in the Forrest promptbook and not even printed in the Hill promptbook which was printed from Forrest's version. Such alterations would suggest that Macready's playing was more restrained, formal, and leisurely, while Forrest's was aimed toward rapid and strong movement.

The cuts in the play indicate much the same sort of difference. The Macready text retains the leisurely beginning and formal dignity of the wedding scene which opened Act III, a scene that was undoubtedly slow. In Forrest's early version, he retained only Pythias's departure to rescue Damon. By the end of his career, Forrest had cut out the scene entirely and transferred the action to a chamber where he could eliminate all but the principal persons involved; moreover, he moved it earlier in the play so that he might keep the suspense heightened in the stories of both heroes, not just that of Damon.

Act II in the original play ends with Damon's being informed that Dionysius will show him no mercy; then Damon bids the guards lead him away. Macready apparently retained

this relatively quiet ending which follows the Shakespearean tradition of emptying the stage at the end of the act. Forrest, on the other hand, lifted from Act III the scene in which Pythias leaves the wedding and closed the act by having Pythias embrace his bride and turn to the guard to say "Now, sirrah, lead me on. Away. Away." This is a more active and vigorous ending, intended to leave the audience worked up rather than quiet. When in his later career Forrest played this piece as a three-act play, he ended the first act at this point, certainly a melodramatic pause for intermission.

Throughout the play, Forrest tended to make other changes which would keep the action flowing rapidly. Consistently, if he could, he eliminated changes of scene, particularly in the early part of the play, with the obvious result that the action continues with fewer interruptions. Such swiftness of movement indicates Forrest's awareness of the need for speed in melodrama.

Furthermore, he cut out the elaborate soliloquies more frequently than did Macready and shortened long-winded dialogue far more drastically. Macready seemed willing to take the play at a much more leisurely pace. One example of the way they made such dialogue cuts will indicate the difference adequately. At the opening of Act II, Pythias and Calanthe are on stage; when Pythias asks her whether she wishes to stay where they are, Calanthe says:

In sooth

I would, for 'tis the fairest place in Sicily:  
A dell, made of green beauty; with its shrubs  
Of aromatic sweetness, growing up  
The rugged mountain's sides, as cunningly  
As the nice structure of a little nest,  
Built by two loving nightingales. The wind,  
That comes there, full of rudeness from the sea,  
Is lull'd into a balmy breath of peace,  
The moment that it enters; and 'tis said  
By our Sicilian shepherds, that their songs  
Have in this place a wilder melody.  
The Mountains all about it are the haunts  
Of many a fine romantic memory!  
High towers old AEtna, with his feet deep clad  
In the green sandals of the freshful spring;  
His sides array'd in winter, and his front  
Shooting aloft the everlasting flame.

On the right hand is that great cave, in which  
Huge Polyphemus dwelt, between whose vast  
Colossal limbs the artful Grecian stole.  
On the other side,  
Is Galatea's dainty dressing-room,  
Wrought in the living marble; and within  
Is seen the fountain where she us'd to twine  
The ringlets on her neck that did ensnare  
The melancholy Cyclop. — But what care you,  
A soldier, for such fantasies?

The Macready text cut out somewhat more than a third of this speech. The Forrest text cut it to

In sooth

I would, for 'tis the fairest place in Sicily.  
— But what care you,  
A soldier, for such fantasies.

And then Calanthe returned to the business of the play. Such a speech as that one would certainly be a slow opening to an act and would stop the movement of the play at any point where it occurred. With an eye to swifter movement, Forrest, it seems, cut it to make way for action. Such is the consistent pattern of Forrest's cuts; Macready retains enough more to suggest that he favored a more nearly static and oratorical performance than did Forrest.

Not only did Forrest cut scenes, scene changes, and lines more drastically than did Macready; he also cut out characters who tended to interfere with the main action. The original play contains a lugubrious scene in the prison, where Pythias's father and Calanthe plead with Pythias to save himself. The author reveled in the details of the father's wretched health — Nicias had risen from what appears to have been his deathbed to beg Pythias to flee. Then in the last scene, word is brought that the emotional strain has killed Nicias. All of the actors who performed this play seem to have felt — quite rightly — that the account of the father's death is a jarring note in the last scene. Indeed, it is the only detail which could even partially justify the author's calling this a tragedy. So all the actors omit reference to the death; but it was Forrest who cut out all reference to the father throughout the text, as he cut out the appearances of other unnecessary characters.



Certainly, it was cheaper to eliminate some of the actors. It also helped keep the main line of action clearer. Pythias's struggle in Forrest's version is far less complex — and therefore more clearly melodramatic — than in the author's befuddled version. To introduce Nicias late in the play and then omit him at the end — as Macready did — leaves an unnecessary loose end at the close.

But the most illuminating of the contrasts is the variance in the treatment of the last act. No one, apparently, played the piece with the published ending intact. The last three pages of the 1821 version of the play are long-winded, mournful, and self-consciously sententious. They are also anticlimactic, since they follow the release of Damon from the death sentence. In the printed version, Pythias kneels to Dionysius, Dionysius apostrophizes virtue, reunites the two men, and then reveals that Nicias has died from the strain. Calanthe enters and rushes to Pythias's arms, taking time only to tell Damon that Hermion and his child are arriving. That family too is reunited. Dionysius closes the play with a final rejoicing when he has learned from Damon and Pythias the pleasures of virtue. But even in the printed form, there is a note about this section that says "The lines between inverted commas are omitted in presentation." Certainly, for sheer confusion of audience sentiment and for anticlimax, few endings can surpass this one.

Macready abbreviated the ending considerably. Pythias still knelt in gratitude at the feet of Dionysius. Calanthe still appeared, but Damon merely mentioned Hermion. Dionysius's final speech about virtue remained. The extensive cuts shortened the ending substantially but still left an anticlimactic finish — much as the quiet endings in which Shakespeare maneuvered his characters offstage would be anticlimactic were they not written in masterful and thrilling poetry. This poetry, however, is far from inspired:

*Dion.* Almighty virtue,  
Now do I own, and worship thee! I see  
The glorious spark which the Eternal One  
Struck from himself into the soul of man,  
Blaze up in such excelling majesty,  
It awes, while it illumines my heart. What ho!  
How, Damon, is it with thee? Come, descend!

Let me conduct thee from this place of death,  
Into the bosom of your friend.

*Pyth.* O, Damon!

*Damon.* Pythias — good Dionysius — no, I cannot;  
Lend me your hand, good Pythias — I could weep.

*[They take each other's hands, and remain  
looking at each other.]*

*Dion.* Until this wondrous hour I walk'd in error,  
And liv'd in darkness! Either my heart was born  
Blind to the light of virtue, or some film  
Hath crept upon its fine susceptibility.

The speeches continue at considerable length in the printed version. Macready showed that he was moving at least in the direction of verbal restraint when he cut this to

Almighty virtue,  
Now do I own, and worship thee!  
Until this wondrous hour I walk'd in error,  
And liv'd in darkness.

But even in this ending Macready shows himself under the tradition of the deliberate, sententious ending.

The Forrest texts both indicate that he knew a good melodramatic climax when he saw one and had a better sense of the flourishing curtain, at least for modern tastes. Macready's ending (and that of the author) may well resemble the ending of a Shakespearean play more closely, but in a theater where a curtain precludes the necessity of getting the actors quietly off at the end of the play, the stronger finish seems to us better than the quiet, prolonged one — at least for melodrama.

Forrest's ending is changed drastically. The play ends thus:

*Dion.* Go, Damocles, and bid a herald cry  
Wide through the city, from the eastern gate  
Unto the most remote extremity,  
That Dionysius, tyrant as he is,  
Gives back his life to Damon. *[Exit Damocles, L.]*

*Pyth.* How, Dionysius?  
Speak that again!

*Dion.* I pardon him.

*Pyth.* Oh, gods!  
You give his life to Damon?

*Dion.* Life and freedom!

*[Damon staggers from the scaffold into the  
arms of Pythias. Three shouts.]*

The stage direction in pencil opposite that last line reads: "Damon staggers from scaffold meets Pythias C. Both sink on their knees embracing with outer hands to Heaven." The text then has the underlined note in handwriting: "Flourish and curtain." The Hill text contains the same ending — the author's original ending is not even printed in this version — with Hill's detailed notation. Pythias delivers himself, just before this ending, of a final bit of bombast, punctuated by much shouting. Then Dionysius reveals himself, a reformed man. With a sure sense of the intense finish, the shouts stop. Hill's notes opposite Dionysius's pardon speech read "No more shouts until Damon falls in Pythias' arms, then. . ." and opposite Dionysius's "life and freedom" speech the printed direction is amplified by Hill's note "Shout and drum and trumpet until curtain is down." Surely this is Forrest's old "Flourish and curtain" filled in in detail by a man who wanted to be sure to record minutely a good bit of effective business. And this is a melodramatic ending — one that concentrates much more on what happens than on what is said. Such an ending would hardly be a quiet one or even free from over-acting, but it would have the virtue of brevity, and the audience no doubt thrilled to its intensity.

A note about the Wallack-Davenport ending may point up further Forrest's skill and effectiveness in acting and staging melodrama. The Forrest promptbook contains notes for their performance as well as Forrest's. Following the freeing of Damon, this note appears:

For Mr. Davenport

Calanthe rushes on exclaiming Husband.

Lucullus rushes on bearing the child — "Master" "Master"

Hermione [sic] rushes on exclaiming Husband.

Shouts and flourish

Everyone got into that act, and while it may be nice to have everyone possible on stage at the end, the directions sound a little like the absurd slaughter at the end of *Titus Andronicus* — overrepetitious, monotonous, and ludicrous in their excessive duplication and clutter. Since the Davenports and the Wallacks played this several times together, the ending may be accounted for on the basis of actor's temperament; perhaps none was willing to be omitted from the end. Whether the actors paused for additional business of reunion between the

speeches and entrances or played these lines and actions without pause, the effect must have decreased considerably the melodramatic climax which preceded. Indeed, one wonders whether the audience could really have failed to find this melodrama had turned into farce at the end.

Such a comparison casts some light on the reputations of Macready and Forrest and on the acting traditions of the nineteenth century. Macready was considered the greater actor for tragedy, and he maintained in this so-called tragedy the stately, dignified, introspective tradition which survives even today in performances of verse tragedy. Forrest had, on the other hand, the reputation of being a great melodramatic actor, and his treatment of this play shows something of the reason. When Forrest performed it, it did not talk itself to death; things happened.

## JOHN RICH: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

by

Paul Sawyer

Neither book nor article (except one in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1832, and Joseph Knight's in the *DNB*) has been published about the life of John Rich, the man who directed one half of London's legitimate theatrical enterprises for almost five decades. First as manager of the playhouse in Lincoln's Inn Fields from 1714 to 1732, then as builder and manager of the Covent Garden theatre from its opening in 1732 until his death in 1761, Rich exerted a powerful, if hardly beneficial, influence upon the English stage. In vigorous opposition to the other patent house, the Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane, he developed the pantomime into one of the most popular of all the Georgian era's entertainments. For his pantomimes he devised amazing scenic and mechanical effects that delighted and mystified his audiences. But Rich was more than the god of the machinery. Under the name of Lun he acted the part of Harlequin, the silent, agile instigator of all the pantomimic fun, and as Harlequin he was universally acclaimed as an incomparable performer whose heels spoke more eloquently than any tongue. Since much of Rich's professional life has been explored (not for its own sake, but for its connection with the biographies of great actors of the period), this paper will concern itself with his private life, which up to now has been pretty well obscured by the dust and rubble of two centuries.

The place of Rich's birth can only be surmised, but the best guess would be London, since his father, Christopher Rich, spent most of his life there. The year of Rich's birth is, in all probability, 1692.<sup>1</sup> Of his early life nothing is known; presumably it was passed around the playhouses with which his father was closely associated. Christopher directed the fortunes of Drury Lane Theatre, and young John must have

<sup>1</sup> For evidence supporting this date see my note, "Date of John Rich's Birth," *Theatre Notebook*, VIII (Jan.-March, 1954), 48.

learned much about management, actors and actresses, and especially about theatre construction and reconstruction on which Christopher doted. In fact his father was rebuilding the playhouse in Lincoln's Inn Fields, eagerly anticipating its opening, when death came on November 4, 1714.<sup>2</sup>

As an older son, John Rich received the bulk of the patrimony. Christopher's will awarded three quarters of his entire estate, including the letters patent, to John and the remaining quarter to Christopher Mosyer, a younger son.<sup>3</sup> John seems to have subjugated his brother very effectively, and Christopher Mosyer spent a comparatively uneventful life as a subordinate in the two theatres John controlled.<sup>4</sup>

John Rich was married three times. His first wife, of whom history records nothing, not even her name, apparently died childless. His second wife, Amy, bore him six children, five daughters and a son. Henrietta, the oldest child, was born in 1727, and three more girls, Charlotte, Mary and Sarah, were born in the next six years. Little is known of the two youngest children, Elizabeth and John, save that they died in 1736 and 1737 respectively, and along with their mother, who also died in 1737, were buried at Hillingdon, near Uxbridge.<sup>5</sup> Rich remained a widower for seven years and then, on November 25, 1744, married Mrs. Priscilla Stevens, a woman twenty-one years his junior.<sup>6</sup>

The third and last Mrs. Rich had herself been married previously (her maiden name was Wilford) and had enjoyed something of a checkered career. She had been a barmaid at Bret's Coffee-house, a mediocre actress with Rich's company, and his housekeeper for several years.<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Bellamy, a famous actress of the period and long a friend of Rich and his family, found the new Mrs. Rich to be rather an unpleasant person. "That lady's regards," she wrote (*Apology*, IV, 121), "were only shewn to those who Bask in sunshine; and not to

<sup>2</sup> See "Rich's Register," Vol. 1, no pagination. Folger Shakespeare Library has a microfilm of this MS.; the original is in the Duke of Devonshire's library at Chatsworth.

<sup>3</sup> The will, dated November 3, 1714, is in Somerset House, Ref. Aston 228.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Mosyer served as treasurer. He outlived John and by the terms of his will received £200 a year.

<sup>5</sup> See the unpubl. master's thesis (University College, London, 1936) by Miss L. V. Paulin, "John Rich and the Eighteenth Century Stage," p. 23. Miss Paulin bases her dates on the Hillingdon Parish Records.

<sup>6</sup> The *London Evening Post*, Nov. 27, 1744.

<sup>7</sup> George Anne Bellamy, *An Apology for the Life of George Anne Bellamy*, Written by Herself, 3rd ed. (London, 1785), I, 198.

poor beings enveloped in a cloud of distress.”<sup>8</sup> Mrs. Rich had been converted to Methodism and “thought of nothing but praying and accumulating wealth for herself and her spouse.” That Rich did not live very tranquilly with her, at least in the first few years of their marriage, can be gleaned from Smollett’s statement that “the poor man’s head, which was not naturally very clear, had been disordered with superstition, and he laboured under the tyranny of a wife and the terror of hell-fire at the same time.”<sup>9</sup>

Rich’s four daughters received a good education<sup>10</sup> and all found husbands, some of them more than one. The eldest, Henrietta, wed one of Rich’s favorite actors, James Bencraft. Frequently a resident of Rich’s home, he probably wooed Henrietta under the benevolent eye of his manager.<sup>11</sup> Upon the death of Bencraft, sometime in 1760 or before, Henrietta espoused an attorney named Wood.<sup>12</sup> The second girl, Charlotte, buried her first husband Mr. Lane and became the wife of John Beard,<sup>13</sup> the great singer, who soon found it expedient to leave Drury Lane and join forces with Covent Garden. He, with Mrs. Rich, succeeded to the management of the theatre on Rich’s death. The third daughter, Mary, married James Morris, and the fourth, Sarah, became Mrs. Valquer. Rich was reputed to have had several illegitimate children, but he acknowledged only one, Catherine Benson, for whom he provided in his will.

There was nothing mean or parsimonious about Rich in his private life. He lived in the most fashionable section of London, Bloomsbury Square, and about 1739 he moved from there to the Parish of St. Paul’s Covent Garden, ostensibly because of a death in his family.<sup>14</sup> This new residence, just south of the popular Bedford Coffee House, was very close to his theatre. Five years later he bought himself a country home at

<sup>8</sup> Bellamy, I, 198.

<sup>9</sup> Tobias Smollett, *Roderick Random*, Everyman Edition, p. 387. (Mrs. Rich died in 1783, aged seventy.)

<sup>10</sup> *A Letter to a Certain Patentee: in which the Conduct of Managers is Impartially Considered; and a few Periods bestowed on those Darlings of the Public, Mr. G-----k, Mr. F-----e, Mrs. P-----d, &c.* (London, 1747), p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Bellamy, I, 185.

<sup>12</sup> Tate Wilkinson, *Memoirs of his own Life* (York, 1790), III, 25.

<sup>13</sup> *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, March 6-8, 1758, reporting this marriage as having taken place a few days before, erroneously calls Mrs. Lane Rich’s eldest daughter.

<sup>14</sup> *Mr. Rich’s Answer to the Falsities and Calumnies Advanced by Mr. John Hill, Apothecary* (London, 1739), p. 3.

Cowley, near Uxbridge, and made extensive and costly improvements.<sup>15</sup> Rich's greatest expenditures, however, were not on houses, but on horses and women. Not only did he place large bets on horses, but he kept his own stable. Newspapers often carried accounts of the exploits of some of his thoroughbreds, two of them appropriately named "Young Harlequin" and "Old Harlequin," and among his rivals on the turf was a sportsman-spendthrift who was also his rival in the theatre, Charles Fleetwood, manager of Drury Lane. For his equine interests Rich did not escape censure. He was accused of "diverting the whole kingdom" with race-horses whose upkeep he could ill afford,<sup>16</sup> and both he and Fleetwood were urged to "let something *run* in their Heads, but their Horses. . . ."<sup>17</sup>

If Rich "maintain'd Running Horses like a Nobleman," he provided for "his ladies like a Person of Spirit and Taste."<sup>18</sup> Always much attracted to the fair sex, he was not above using his position in the theatre to further his lusty ambitions and was accused of neglecting his business because he was so much engrossed in his seraglio.<sup>19</sup>

The bitterest attack upon Rich's style of living was made in a pamphlet by James Ralph, who rarely minced his words on any subject. Ralph could not understand by what right a theatrical manager, dependent for his income upon a patent, could live like an English duke or a German prince, with country and town homes, several carriages, packs of dogs and flocks of women. Before Rich (whose name is not mentioned) fell into debt "by his own Whims," Ralph felt that he should be placed in the custody of a "sensible female Housekeeper."<sup>20</sup>

Prophetic indeed were these words, or perhaps Ralph was aware of the situation *chez* Rich, for along came that "sensible female Housekeeper" — Priscilla Stevens — and she seems to have completely reformed Rich. In 1747, only three years after their marriage, the author of *A Letter to a Certain Patentee* remarked (pp. 5-6), with some satisfaction, upon this alteration:

<sup>15</sup> Bellamy, I, 46.

<sup>16</sup> See Henry Fielding's dedication of his play *Tumble-Down Dick, or Phaeton in the Suds* to "John Lun, vulgarly called Esquire."

<sup>17</sup> *The Prompter*, Dec. 13, 1734.

<sup>18</sup> *A Letter to a Certain Patentee*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>19</sup> See *The London Magazine*, Feb. 1736, p. 90; and *See and Seem Blind: Or, a Critical Dissertation on the Publick Diversion, &c. Of Persons and Things, and Things and Persons, and what not.* In a LETTER from the Right Hon. the Lord B----- to A----- H----- Esq.; (London, 1733), p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> See *The Case of our Present Theatrical Disputes Stated* (London, 1743), pp. 3-5.



Mr. R--H, to be sure, has been a great Libertine in his Time, and much given to the Flesh; but now, Glory be to G-d for it, the Manifestation of the Proverb is happily come to pass in him, viz. Never too late to mend... he is now like the lost Sheep that is found: He hath now turn'd the Brothel into a Temple, and he kneeleth to pray where he hath kneel'd heretofore to -----.

Thus advancing age, decreasing health, and a domineering wife inspired by the energy of a new religious movement seem to have made a much abused lamb out of a once stormy lion.

Along with his taste for noble vices, Rich cultivated a taste for noble friends. Stage, sex and nobility were often closely allied and Rich was familiar with all three. Horace Walpole, in one of his letters, talks about two actresses who are being kept by two lords and adds that "Rich the Harlequin is an intimate of all."<sup>21</sup> Rich acted as host to the Prince of Wales, Frederick, George II's son, when he visited Bartholomew Fair in the waning summer of 1740,<sup>22</sup> and was, together with the managers of Drury Lane and the Haymarket, of sufficient consequence to be expected to attend court regularly.

Rich must have been delighted by the success of the Sublime Society of Beefsteaks, an eating club he founded in 1735. This convivial group, which endured until 1867, attracted many of the most eminent men of the time connected with literature, fashion and the drama. At first, probably, some of Rich's friends chanced to drop by the theatre and exchange a few words with him in the painting loft, where he and his scene painter, George Lambert, were working. They were so well entertained by the witty conversation, old port wine, and hot beefsteak dressed by Rich himself, that a club was formed which met every Saturday afternoon at two o'clock. The original membership of twenty-four included Rich, of course, several prominent actors, artists William Hogarth and George Lambert, and gentlemen of the town. Election to the Sublime Society of Beefstake became a coveted honor, and even the Prince of Wales, later George IV, had to wait his turn until a vacancy occurred. Other famous members were Samuel

<sup>21</sup> *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, fourth earl of Orford, ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee (Oxford, 1903-05), II, 282.

<sup>22</sup> For a vivid, if fanciful, description of this occasion, see John Doran, "*Their Majesties Servants*" - *Annals of the English Stage from Betterton to Edmund Kean*, ed. and rev. by Robert W. Lowe (London, 1888), II, 137.

Johnson, Charles Churchill, John Wilkes, the Duke of York and the Earl of Sandwich, a roster to tickle the heart of any social climber.<sup>23</sup>

Rich could be a good host "and loved a private party where he could unbend himself."<sup>24</sup> To his occasional verbal felicity, he added certain other talents which could provide amusement for those who watched their effect. One story, praising Rich's ability to imitate by gestures the action of a man eating a piece of fruit, describes how he spoiled a horn player's concert by sitting opposite him and pretending to eat a lemon.<sup>25</sup> Another, perhaps apocryphal, relates how Rich so swiftly vaulted in and out of a hackney coach in which he was riding that the bewildered driver thought he was a devil and refused to accept any money from him.<sup>26</sup>

A gift for caricature and a native quickness of tongue were other Rich possessions. Spranger Barry, the great romantic actor of the period, was notorious for his winning but deceptive ways which Rich epitomized by saying that Barry could "wheedle a bird from the tree, and squeeze it to death in his hand."<sup>27</sup> Once, at the Bedford Coffee House, he met Garrick, newly come to the London stage and drawing huge crowds to Drury Lane (after his initial triumph at Goodman's Fields theatre) while Rich's pantomimes played to empty benches. Garrick asked Rich how much Covent Garden would hold when crowded to capacity. "Why, master," Rich answered, "I cannot well tell; but if you will come and play *Richard* for one night, I shall be able to give an accurate account."<sup>28</sup>

But Rich's humor was hardly as well-known as some of his other characteristics, particularly the frequency with which he took snuff, his constant stroking of cats, and his inability or unwillingness to remember some people's name.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> For two of the best accounts of this organization and its membership see Walter Arnold, *The Life and Death of the Sublime Society of Beefsteaks* (London, 1871); and Louis C. Jones, *The Clubs of the Georgian Rakes* (New York, 1942), pp. 142-155.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Davies, *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.*, new ed. (London, 1808), I, 370-371.

<sup>25</sup> *The Eccentricities of John Edwin, Comedian*, arr. and digested by Anthony Pasquin (pseudonym of John Williams) (London, 1791), p. 197.

<sup>26</sup> Gridiron Gabble, Gent., *Green Room Gossip; or, Gravity Gallinip: a Gallimaufry* (London, 1809), pp. 117-118.

<sup>27</sup> Wilkinson, III, 74. This was, Wilkinson stated, "a severe caricature of Barry, but shrewd and too near a resemblance."

<sup>28</sup> Richard Ryan, *Dramatic Table Talk* (London, 1825), III, 103.

<sup>29</sup> John Jackson, *The History of the Scottish Stage from its first Establishment to the Present Time* (Edinburgh, 1793), p. 357. Note, however, that Jackson knew Rich only in his declining years when the manager's peculiarities became more marked.

scriptions of Rich often mention that his nostrils were stuffed with snuff, and there are innumerable allusions to his fondness for cats. The gaudy and imaginative memoirs of Mrs. Woffington offer an amusing, if exaggerated, picture of Rich surrounded by twenty-seven cats on the occasion of Peg Woffington's visit, *circa* 1740.<sup>30</sup> About twenty years later, in 1760, Rich's interest in cats had increased from a penchant to a passion, Samuel Foote attempted to prevent being mimicked by Tate Wilkinson on the Covent Garden stage by threatening the manager's beloved cats:

"Mimic me, you old hound!" Foote shouted at Rich, "if you dare let Wilkinson take any liberty with me as to mimicry, I will bring you yourself, on the stage! And if he dares to appear in my characters, in the next or, I will... instantly produce your old stupid and ridiculous self, with three cats, and your hound of a mimic altogether, next week at Drury-Lane, for the general diversion of the pit, boxes, and galleries; and that be paying you, you squinting old Hecate, too great a compliment!"

Foote so frightened Rich, who "dreaded an affront on his favorite cat more than on himself," that Wilkinson and Sparks, an important actor at Covent Garden who sometimes helped in the management, had difficulty in persuading him to allow a new version of Foote's comedy, *The Minor*, to be played.<sup>31</sup> Rich often forgot other people's names, and called men "Mister" or "Mister." Once Rich called Foote, who had a fiery temper and a sharper wit, "Mister" several times and Foote flared into wrath and demanded why Rich didn't call him by his name. "Don't be angry," Rich tried to calm him, "for I sometimes forget my own name." "That's extraordinary indeed," Foote snapped, "I knew you could not write your own name, but I did not suppose you could forget it." When Rich could not forget a name, he often mangled it. Garrick he called "Wilkin," Foote sometimes was "Footseye," Shuter "Shuttleworth," Barry "Barleymore," Sparks "Sparkish," Younger "Youngmore," and Wilkinson "Williamskin" or "Whittington." Probably an inferiority complex caused Rich to develop this rough dialect, and his dominating position as manager perpetuated him to continue it.

<sup>30</sup> *Memoirs of the late Celebrated Mrs. Woffington*, 2nd ed. with additions (London, 1760), 9-20.

<sup>31</sup> Wilkinson, III, 20-21.

<sup>32</sup> Davies, *Garrick*, I, 370-371.

<sup>33</sup> Some of these corruptions are recorded by Wilkinson, III, 73-74.

Possibly a further explanation of Rich's corruption of the names of actors is that some of them had succeeded in a line of acting — tragedy — in which he had ardently desired approbation and met only failure. Rich, a truly great Harlequin, was a frustrated tragedian. Twice he essayed the part of Essex in John Banks's *The Unhappy Favourite*, the first time on October 22, 1715. The newspapers announced "Essex by a Gentleman for his diversion,"<sup>34</sup> but there was more than diversion here; there was surely a background of youthful ambitions and golden dreams, an imagined future with a new Betterton once more treading the boards of Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre. His reception is unknown; it could hardly have been sensational, yet it was not so absolutely disappointing that he was unable to try again. A few weeks later, on November 10, he reappeared in the same role in the same play.<sup>35</sup> Something must have happened that night which left an indelible impression on his mind or the audience's, for he never again ventured tragedy. Perhaps his elocution was unequal to the fustian he was called upon to recite; perhaps the part was too difficult for a tyro, because an accomplished actor like Barton Booth also failed in the role at Drury Lane, and at his own Lincoln's Inn Fields, Lacy Ryan, Keene, and Elrington played Essex soon after Rich's effort, none of them with pronounced success.

From this bitter experience might have arisen Rich's deep hatred for tragedy and tragedians. When he observed the huge crowds flocking to his own theatre in 1753 and 1754 to see Spranger Barry and Miss Nossiter in *Romeo and Juliet* he would sneeringly exclaim, "What, are you come? Much good may it do you — I envy not your taste!"<sup>36</sup> He carried his antipathy far enough to lose the greatest drawing card of the century, David Garrick. According to Davies (*Garrick*, I, 142-143), Rich could have signed the popular actor, who had played with the Covent Garden company during the 1746-47 season, to a long term contract before Garrick sought a share of the Drury Lane patent in 1747. Rich not only did little to retain him, but seemed pleased when he left, and later satirized Garrick's interpretation of King Lear to a captive audience of his own performers.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted by John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage From the Restoration in 1660 to 1830* (Bath, 1832), II, 581.

<sup>35</sup> Genest, II, 581. Rich's name appeared in the bills.

<sup>36</sup> Jackson, p. 363.

However much he may have despised actors, he had a psychopathic compulsion to "larn" them, and

he valued himself more on his skill in giving instruction to the actors, than his inimitable harlequinade. His levee was constantly crowded with a number of candidates for the buskin, for he thought himself a perfect master of tragic elocution; and though he could not read ten lines with propriety, yet he had constantly a Richard, a Hamlet, or a Lear in training for the stage. He was so very fond of this employment, that the meanest mechanics, who would submit to take his instructions, were sure to be encouraged by him.<sup>37</sup>

He seemed to take especial care with the ladies, but none of his pupils, male or female, ever became a famous actor. In pantomime, where Rich's natural forte lay, he was more successful. Some of the leading Harlequins of the period, Woodward, Arthur, Lalauze, and several others were his students.

Just how seriously Rich regarded his role of teacher is apparent in his attempts to coach Wilkinson, whom he wanted to play the part of the gardener in Rich's farce, *The Spirit of Contradiction*. Rich promised that the role would make Wilkinson's fortune, if he "would implicitly yield to his instructions." When Wilkinson suggested Shuter, a leading comedian in Rich's company, for the part, Rich

"took his snuff, stroaked his cat, and said, "If I give it [sic] *Muster Shuttleworth* he will not let me teach him, and he is so idle: I want it perfect *Muster Williamskin*; but I will larn you *Muster*, if you will play the part from my tuition."

When prompter, Younger, came into the room where the lesson was taking place, the fact that he was on urgent and important stage business did not prevent Rich, furious at the interruption, from flying into a rage and shouting, "Get away *Muster Youngmore*, I am teaching *Muster Whittington* to act." After six days of instructions Wilkinson decided to go to Dublin and refused both the part and a three year contract Rich offered him, upon which Rich handed him five guineas and dismissed him.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Davies, *Garrick*, I, 370. But for evidence that Rich did not read so badly as Davies states, see the preface written by John Hill, *Orpheus, An English Opera* (London, 1740), p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> Wilkinson, III, 70-74, relates the story of his experiences with *The Spirit of Contradiction*.

This unanticipated and, as Wilkinson confesses, completely undeserved gift was typical of another side of Rich's character. On numerous occasions he demonstrated a generosity which is often a concomitant of extravagance. He was more liberal in granting benefits than Drury Lane, and in the season of 1732-33, when the managers of that theatre failed to keep their promise to allow a benefit to a certain person, Rich immediately agreed to permit the use of his house "from no other Motive than the Difficulties under which the Person labour'd in his Circumstances."<sup>39</sup> In common with, but more frequently than, Drury Lane he gave free benefits to the widows and children of needy actors and authors, to war veterans and fire sufferers and worthy organizations. Poets and players saddened by low receipts on their benefit nights were heartened, according to Wilkinson (IV, 183), when Rich took those nights to himself and allotted them another. Garrick, too, when engaged with Rich in 1746 profited unexpectedly. He had written a farce, *Miss in her Teens*, which was so successful that on the night of its fifteenth performance Rich gave him a second benefit, without informing him of it.<sup>40</sup>

A short time before Rich's death, when a man fell from the upper gallery into the pit of Covent Garden theatre, breaking his leg, Rich ordered that the man be given every possible assistance at his expense.<sup>41</sup> He also rescued a fair damsel in distress, a Miss Norsa who had been cruelly deceived by her lover, the Earl of Orford. Penniless because Orford had borrowed £3000 from her and died without repaying it, Miss Norsa was taken by Rich into his home and treated kindly as long as she lived.<sup>42</sup> At his home in Uxbridge Rich was regarded as "an obliging neighbour, a hospitable country gentleman, and a very kind landlord," who especially delighted in paying for the weddings of his young tenants and making them happy.<sup>43</sup>

Rich seems to have been as courageous as he was generous. Although not a large man, tending to corpulence in his

<sup>39</sup> *Grubstreet Journal*, May 17, 1733.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Dibdin, *A Complete History of the Stage* (London, n. d. [1795]), V, 137. Dibdin adds, however, that Rich said he would not have done this had he expected Garrick to leave Covent Garden.

<sup>41</sup> James Thomas Kirkman, *Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin, Esq.* (London, 1799), I, 427.

<sup>42</sup> William Cooke, *Memoirs of Samuel Foote, Esq.* (New York, 1806), II, 190-191.

<sup>43</sup> Davies, *Garrick*, I, 371-372.

later years, and almost blind in one eye,<sup>44</sup> there is no record of his having recoiled from any kind of challenge. To protect his performers and performances Rich would brook the wrath even of a lord aroused by wine or love or both. When he had just turned thirty, he boldly defended the sanctity of the Lincoln's Inn Fields stage against a noble but drunken earl who crossed it in the middle of a comedy. The audience hooted its disapproval and Rich said to him,

I hope your Lordship will not take it ill, if I give orders to the Stage-Door-keeper not to admit you any more. On his saying that, my Lord saluted Mr. *Rich* with a Slap on the Face, which he immediately returned; and his Lordship's face being round and fat made his Cheek ring with the Force of it. Upon this spirited Return, my Lord's drunken Companions collected themselves directly, and Mr. Rich was to be put to Death; but *Quin, Ryan, Walker, &c. &c.* [members of Rich's company] stood forth in Defence of the Manager and a grand Scuffle ensued, by which the Gentlemen were all drove out at the Stage-Door into the Street.<sup>45</sup>

More than two decades later, in 1748, Rich was called on again to deal with a nobleman, Lord Byron, who was much smitten with the charms of George Anne Bellamy and determined to carry her off during a performance of *Theodosius*. Leaning menacingly against one of the side-scenes, Lord Byron inspired such terror in Mrs. Bellamy that Rich noticed her alarm, understood the cause, and made his way from his box to the wings where he pleaded with Byron to desist from his planned abduction. Seeing Byron remained unmoved, Rich, in blunt tones, told him, "I desire, my Lord, that you will quit the scenes, for I cannot stand tamely by and see my performers insulted." Byron wisely decided to let discretion precede valor and retired to a stage-box.<sup>46</sup>

Just as there can be no question of Rich's bravery, so there can be none of his ignorance and obtuseness. Dibdin (IV, 398) termed him "perhaps the most ignorant of all human beings." Tate Wilkinson, even while conceding that Rich was "really good," talked of his "*natural* stupidity." (III, 74 and

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies* (London, 1784), I, 180-181, mentions the "great blemish" in one of Rich's eyes.

<sup>45</sup> Benjamin Victor, *The History of the Theatres of London and Dublin* (London, 1776), II, 147-149.

<sup>46</sup> Bellamy II, 9-11.

II, 133) Thomas Davies (*Garrick*, I, 370) said that his understanding was good, although because of a "grossly neglected" education, his language was vulgar and ungrammatical. Genest (IV, 656) relates his confusing the words "turbot" and "turban." In complaining that Signora Spilletta, a member of the Italian burletta troupe at Covent Garden in the fifties did not emphasize properly, he observed "the Italians, as well as the English, lay their EMPHERSIS on the ADJUTANT."<sup>47</sup> When *The Prompter* (Jan. 17, 1735) suggested that the English Harlequin (Rich) follow the example of the increasingly popular French Harlequin at the rival Haymarket theatre and quit his silence, a correspondent disagreed. "He ought never to speak; since his Tongue wants those Documents to which his Heels have been Educated--- You have perhaps heard, that His Understanding was born Deaf...." More literate but less affluent playwrights and critics constantly impugned Rich's intelligence and discrimination, but such as they were, they were usually adequate to cope with most of his actors.

At times Rich betrayed an infantile desire for attention, apparently believing that an unfavorable mention was better than no mention at all. An oft-told tale describes Rich listening to Garrick's epilogue to *The Suspicious Husband* on opening night in 1747 at Covent Garden, spoken by Mrs. Pritchard:

An ass there was, our author bids me say,  
Who needs must write, he did, and wrote a play.  
The parts were cast to various beasts and fowl;  
The stage a barn, the manager an owl...

Upon hearing the words, "the manager an owl," Rich turned to a friend and whispered, "He means me."<sup>48</sup>

In judging certain aspects of the character of the owl who loved pussycats, critics differed greatly. Their own prejudices, as well as Rich's, undoubtedly colored their opinions. To some Rich was "a man that ne'er alters his Mind,"<sup>49</sup> and "malicious,"<sup>50</sup> yet he seems to have borne few grudges (except

<sup>47</sup>Gray's *Imm Journal*, Jan. 5, 1754.

<sup>48</sup>Arthur Murphy, *The Life of David Garrick* (London, 1801), p. 83.

<sup>49</sup>William Shirley, *A Bone for the Chroniclers to pick; or A Take-off Scene from behind the Curtain* (n.p., n.d.), p. 2.

<sup>50</sup>Joseph Gay, *The Confederates* (London, 1717), scene ii.



against tragedy) and was objective enough to maintain amicable relations with Colley Cibber in spite of the unflattering picture Cibber had drawn of his father.<sup>51</sup> Although Kirkman (I, 426) asserted that Rich was "not by any means liberal to his actors," he was certainly no more grasping than other managers, and on many occasions he treated his actors generously. Dibdin (V, 125), one of Rich's severest critics, testified that Rich satisfied "to the letter" all those, including actors, with whom he had made engagements, and an earlier writer states that he was a "most religious observer of his own Word."<sup>52</sup>

John Rich died at his home on November 26, 1761, a victim of "gravel and stone," according to *Lloyd's Evening Post* (Nov. 25-27). At the moment of his death his theatre, only a few yards away from where he lay, was packed with crowds flocking to see his last production, a spectacularly successful representation of the coronation of George III. He was buried in the churchyard at Hillingdon, near Uxbridge, and upon the impressive memorial surmounting the grave are chiselled these words:

Sacred to the Memory of John Rich, Esqr. Who died November 26th 1761, Aged 69 years: In him were united the various Virtues, that could endear Him to his Family, Friends, and Acquaintance: Distress never failed to find Relief in his Bounty; Unfortunate Merit a Refuge in his Generosity...

The periodicals took proper notice of Rich's departure, one obituary (*The Public Advertiser*, Nov. 27) calling him a gentleman "to whom the Public is indebted for many years agreeable Entertainment, and who adorn'd domestic Life with all the Virtues of Humanity." Two lengthy poetic tributes appeared, one printed in *Lloyd's Evening Post* (Dec. 7-9), entitled "Elegiac Verses on the Death of the late Manager of Covent-Garden Theatre. In a Dialogue between Pataloon and Columbina" is satire rather than panegyric. The other, 42 lines of rhymed couplets, is more decorous, more touching, and much more laudatory. "Think on the num'rous hours of sport," the anonymous author urged,

<sup>51</sup> Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies*, III, 418.

<sup>52</sup> George Akerby, *The Life of Mr. James Spiller, The Late Famous Comedian* (London, 1729), p. 11.

We spent with him in fancy's court!  
What ev'nings of supreme delight!  
They're past--they're clos'd in endless night.  
---For gratitude, for virtue's cause,  
Crown his last exit with applause...<sup>53</sup>

John Rich's will provided that his theatre be directed jointly by his wife and his son-in-law, John Beard, and directed them to sell it "as soon as a sum adequate to the value thereof" could be obtained.<sup>54</sup> It was not until 1767 that four gentlemen, George Colman the elder, Thomas Harris, John Rutherford and George Powell, produced the adequate sum of £60,000 and took possession. The dynasty of the Rich family, so potent a factor in the London theatre almost without interruption since 1689, was over.

<sup>53</sup>*London Magazine*, Dec., 1761, pp. 668-669.

<sup>54</sup>For details of the will, now in Somerset House, Ref. Cheslyn 444, I am indebted to Miss Paulin.

